A

Practical Diſcourſe

CONCERNING

Chriſtian Converſation.

PURPOSELY

Written to Vindicate and Improve the *Religious SOCIETIES*, of late Years Erected in the Cities of *London*, *Glouceſter*, &c.

By *Philopatris* and *Philadelphus*,
Members of the Church of *ENGLAND*.

Τὴν ἀδελφότητα ἀγαπᾶτε. 1 Pet. 2. 17.
Ἡ φιλαδελφία μενέτω. Heb. 13. 1.

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TO THE

READER.

Christian Reader,

PRAY do not be very inquisitive to know who were the Authors of this Treatise; for whoever they are, assure thy self, that they design'd it for thy good.

God, who knows all things, and penetrates the corners of those hearts which he has made, can

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witneſs, that 'tis not introduced into the world for the ſake of Gain, Fame, a Scribling humour, or any ſuch mean Ends.

No, nor yet meerly with the Plea of a good intention, or of gratifying the requeſt of Friends; which reaſons alone (tho by too many reckoned very weighty ones) would never have prevailed with us, as ſufficient motives to publiſh it.

In

In ſhort, Reader, (not to detain thee too long in ſuſpence) nothing leſs than the Excellency of the Subject handled herein, and its being for ſo many years neglected by abler hands, forc'd us to write this Book. For alas! what a ſtrange and ſhameful thing is it for a Man to reflect, how beneficial theſe Religious Societies have proved to our Kingdom, by having in ſo great a meaſure propagated Piety, and very wor-

thy Examples of Chriſtian practice amongſt us; and yet that ſo many ingenious and skilful Writers (who have buſied their brains about trifles, or at leaſt ſuch Subjects which have been better managed before) have not in the leaſt imployed their Pens about Religious Societies?

This ſeems to us very plainly to diſcover, that Men now-a-days are very much inſlaved to a Dogmatical Curioſity; who

who can ſo prodigally lay out their Talents on Controverſial and Speculative points (which tear the Church in pieces, and have made Men rather prove Tygers and Wolves to one another, than behave themſelves like Sociable Creatures) but will not ſo much as beſtow a Line, for the encouragement of thoſe Societies, which ſo highly promote the practice of Religion, which is moſt neceſſary.

Now therefore ſince

the caſe is ſo, we hope this gift of ours will not be deſpiſed, ſince like the Widows mite, 'twill find a kind regard in his eyes, who has not demanded a larger Tribute from his Creatures, than what they are able to offer: which we had in modeſty withheld, had any one elſe took the work into their hands.

It is not by any means fitting, that ſuch hopeful Seminaries of Religion ſhould be concealed any longer,

longer, and be deprived of what Encouragement they may obtain by the World's having received a right Information of their Nature and Tendency; and the Members thereof being directed and animated to regulate Proceedings in their Aſſemblies, and walk worthy of what they profeſs.

This is the main ſcope of this *Practical Treatiſe*, which we have written in as plain a ſtyle and method

thod as we could, for the ſake of all *Chriſtians*.

For which reaſon, let no one complain, becauſe 'tis not beautified with elegant Expreſſions, *&c.* ſince if they can act the Critick's Part, 'tis their proper Buſineſs to blame their own Idleneſs, for not *medling* with it themſelves, and *acknowledge* themſelves to be the more indebted to theſe Labours of meaner Abilities, which are the Fruits of ſome By-minutes, ſtolen from our other

other neceſſary Studies.

To conclude, if our earneſt Wiſhes, and a generous Hope of reſtoring primitive Exemplarineſs and Peace to the Sons of the *Church* of *England*, can procure a Bleſſing from above upon our Attempt, and candid Acceptance of it from our Brethren, we have juſt reaſon to expect it.

So importunately beſpeaking thy Prayers to *God*, both for thy own, and our *Conſcientious Improvement*

ment of what is herein preſented to thy peruſal, concerning *Chriſtian Converſation* (for this will abundantly recompence the Pains which we have taken to produce this Teſtimony of our Gratitude to *GOD*, and Good-will to thee and all Men) *Courteous Chriſtian*, we bid thee

Farewel.

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A

PRACTICAL DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

Chriſtian Converſation.

CHAP. I.

Proved from Nature, that Man is a Sociable Creature.

AMONG the ſeveral Truths, which we may learn from the Order of Nature, this is one very worthy to be thought of, That Man is by Nature a Sociable Creature.

NOW we cannot doubt of this, if we conſider him, firſt, meerly as a Creature; he muſt be naturally inclined to be ſociable, becauſe every Creature is ſo. All living Creatures are

mov'd by a common Inſtinct, to covet a neighbourhood with Fellows of their own Kind. Bees and Ants ſeem to form themſelves into Communities; for they ſwarm, and toyl, and dwell together; the Birds delight to flock and chirp together in their proper Element.

AND therefore we find the Jewiſh Law-giver, in his Account of the Creation of the Univerſe, *(Gen.* 1.*)* repreſenting God to take great Complacency in his Works, when all ſorts of Creatures were ranged together in their diſtinct places, when the Waters of the Sea were gathered together into one place, and likewiſe the Beaſts of the Earth after their kind, and the Cattel, and every creeping thing after their kind: So that after, by this means, they abundantly increaſed and multiplied; *then* God ſaw every thing that he had made, and *behold 'twas very good*; neither did he leave Man without a Companion; for *it is not good that Man ſhould be alone.* His nature was no more adapted for Solitude than the reſt

reſt of the Creatures; and therefore God found out a Help meet for him, whereby he might be capacitated to ſtock the Earth with more rational Inhabitants, and propagate his own Kind: Moreover, that this might be continued in the Infancy of the World, God allowed Mankind a larger number of Years and a longer Extent of Life here below.

AND when in proceſs of Time Men encreaſed upon the Earth, they preſently began to found Cities, enact Laws, and ſettle Governments, that they might unite themſelves into Societies; which plainly ſhews that Man hath an Inſtinct to Sociableneſs implanted in him by Nature. A ſolitary Life is very uneaſy to him or any other Creature, and what none ever choſe to lead, unleſs they were wholly debarred of thoſe whoſe Society Similitude of Nature prompts them to covet.

NEITHER need we wonder, that Nature hath not ventured to truſt Man here by himſelf, ſince the An-

gels above augment their Happineſs by the mutual Repaſts of one anothers Society; even thoſe bleſſed Spirits joyn together in numerous Bodies, worſhip God, and war againſt Hell in Myriads. In ſhort, God alone, the Creator and Governour of all things, is able to communicate ſufficient Satisfaction to himſelf out of his own inexhauſtible Treaſures of infinite Perfection, God only admits of no Equal; for there is but one God, and who can compare with this Lord? but all other Beings are created and fitted to enjoy one another.

BUT though all Creatures are ſpurred on by an innate Propenſity to Sociableneſs, yet Nature who hath inclined the Birds of the Air, and the Beaſts of the Field, with the Fiſhes of the Sea to be congregable, hath more peculiarly framed Man fit to converſe with his Fellow-Creatures; the erectneſs of his Body, the lively Lineaments of his Countenance, the uneaſineſs of his impriſoned Thoughts, and his Faculty of Speech, are plain Indications of his natural Sociableneſs; they are all very

very genuine Poſtures, and Whetſtones of Society. For, to inſiſt more particularly on the laſt, the Tongue being in Man (who is a rational Creature) not only an Inſtrument of taſting, but alſo of ſpeaking, proves Man to be a more ſociable Creature by Nature than any of the reſt; for if it were otherwiſe ſhe would not have made him more capable of being ſo than any of them.

WHEREFORE, if we ſhould imagine that Man was deſigned by Nature to live like the Scholars of *Pythagoras*, in continual Silence and Loneſomeneſs, we ſhould charge her with a great Abſurdity, as if ſhe had given us an inſtrument which ſhe hath not allowed us to make a free and perfect Uſe of; but we muſt ſuppoſe ſo, if we think that Nature did not intend Man to be ſociable; for of what Uſe can our Faculty of Speech be in a Wilderneſs?

BUT 'tis Needleſs to multiply Words; for we may obſerve with the Apoſtle S. *James* that the *tongue is a little member, but it boaſteth great*

things. Our Tongue is ſo far from being uſeleſs, that we have good Reaſon to judge it one of the moſt uſeful Parts of man's Body. Speech is the privilege which we have common with Angels, and which the brute Beaſts mimick with their inarticulate Sounds.

WHENCE we may plainly ſee, that Nature has ſown in them a fierce Longing and Deſire to communicate their Joys and Griefs; for this is the chief Province of an humane Tongue, to interpret the Sentiments of our Minds, to expound the ambiguous Cauſe of our Tears, to heighten our Joys by expreſſing them to others, and to ſpill the Griefs of our laden Hearts, to render our Preſence more open and pleaſant to each other, and to exchange our Thoughts with eaſe and readineſs. But moreover, the Tongue is the nimbleſt Member of our whole Body; the Difficulty of maſtering it when it is the Meſſenger of our diſorderly Paſſions, ſufficiently proves this. Whence we may gather, that Speaking is the moſt delicious Entertainment of

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our nature, becauſe ſhe hurries us on, and betrays us to exceſs in the exerciſe of it, and therefore we may conclude, that ſhe whets our appetite to Society.

And perhaps, this may be one of the reaſons for which we ſhall reaſſume our Bodies in a more glorious and refin'd Conſtitution, that ſince Sociableneſs is ſo pleaſant, we may delight one another with the preſents of Hallowed and Divine Tongues, and ſo improve this natural capacity of Sociableneſs to the nobleſt pitch.

But (not to ſtraggle from what we propoſed to demonſtrate) we may further evince Mans natural ſociableneſs from the dependence we have upon one another. Nature hath diſtributed various gifts and endowments among men; ſome ſhe hath enriched more abundantly with the ornaments of the mind, others ſhe hath arm'd with a greater meaſure of bodily ſtrength and vigour; neither hath ſhe only given men different abilities, but alſo inclin'd their Genius to take very dif-

ferent courſes, in the improvement of theſe Liberal Faculties. By this method ſhe hath contrived, that no uſeful Art or Science ſhould want cultivation, and that all men might ſtand in need of borrowing aſſiſtance from their Neighbours. Now if ſhe did not determine man to be ſociable, why hath ſhe not furniſhed every individual perſon with a competent diſcretion, and dexterity, both to till the Ground, and conſult its Herbs; to inform the mind, and build Houſes; to untie knotty caſes in the Law, and to prepare a covering for our nakedneſs, ſince all theſe and a vaſt many more, whether manual or intellectual labours, are neceſſary for our comfortable ſubſiſtence here?

FOR as much therefore, as ſhe doth by her Polity ſo clearly tell us, that we are dependent upon one another, what voice or Trumpet can more ſolemnly ſummon men to concorporate themſelves, that (all of them imploying their Capacities in Offices moſt proper for them) they may conſpire toge-

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ther to make each other happy?

THE ſenſe of this very ſucceſsfully invited Mankind at firſt to ſtrike the leagues of Friendſhip, act chearfully without diſcord in their aſſign'd ſtations, and reſt firmly in their Compacts of Juſtice and Love.

AND ſurely if the ordinary affairs and occaſions of life require foreign aid and comfort, much more do thoſe extraordinary caſualties, ſuch as ſickneſs, deſpondency, and other calamities (too many to number) to which we are expoſed, render us dependent upon one another. For tho' we chiefly ought to relie upon God, becauſe we originally derive the breath of life, with the continuance of it, from the ſecret bounty of the Divine Providence; yet the nothing which we brought along with us into the world, with the follies of our youth, unleſs checkt by a Parental authority, may ſuggeſt to us our mutual dependence which we have by nature upon one another too; and if we are dependent by nature, then we are ſociable by nature. For

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'tis impoſſible for men, who ſo much depend upon their fellows to live happily, if they keep at a very remote diſtance from one another.

FOR which reaſon 'tis convenient for men not to ſeparate, but to imitate the harmonious and regular courſe of the inanimate world, which immediately obeys the careful hand of nature; for it being devoid of the Principle of Volition, cannot move otherwiſe than ſhe pleaſes, or queſtion the authority or wiſdom of her commands.

LET us but obſerve with what harmony and accord, and in how regular a courſe, the Sun, Moon, and Stars, meaſure the ſpacious Firmament; how the Earth, the Sea, the Air, and all the inanimate parts of this lower Orb, lovingly ſtick cloſe together, and by their kind combination preſerve this beautiful Scene of which we are daily Spectators; we ſcarce ever ſee their joints diſtorted, but are the happy partakers of the kind influences of their conſtant unity. Since we may reaſonably

bly take it for granted therefore that they act beſt in the judgment of nature who act intirely according to her will; and ſince the Inanimate World doth ſo, unleſs we can imagine that ſhe treads counter to her own ſteps, and contradicts her own ſelf, we muſt grant that if ſhe could ſway as uncontroul'd a Scepter in the Rational World (which is made up of free Agents and Beings, which can obey or diſobey her as they think fit) that ſhe would have all men (who are but a Globe of dependent Creatures, and ſuch whoſe intereſts are as nearly twiſted together, as the parts of the Inanimate Maſs of things) to reckon themſelves as members of one univerſal humane body; and conſequently, not to exert an hoſtile antipathy to one another by ſeparation, but to be ſociable; which if obſerved, might prove of as excellent uſe, as the ſociableneſs of Inanimate things.

HAVING, we hope, ſufficiently prov'd Man to be by nature a ſociable Creature, from his being a Creature, his

his faculty of ſpeech, his dependent condition upon his fellows; and laſtly, from the coherent order of the Inanimate World, we proceed now to draw ſome practical inferences from it.

1. THEN we obſerve that if Man is by nature a Sociable Creature, that God would have him to be ſo. By him Men and all things are, and were created. In his Book our tongues, and all our members were written; which day by day were faſhioned; when as yet there was none of them; he ſends us naked into the world, and procures us thoſe who act in his ſtead for us; places us in a condition which (whatſoever it be) capacitates us both to give and receive help and comfort from abroad; the works of nature in all this are but the products of his Counſel and Power; for we could not be conſcious to the making of our ſelves; and if the corruption of our rational nature, after we are thus made, ſeduceth us to countermine the Stratagems of his goodneſs by diſcord and ſeparation, we cannot juſtly impute it to

to him, for not hindering us; ſince he will not bind our will with cords of violence; 'tis ſufficient that he hath imprinted ſuch plain leſſons of ſociableneſs on the frame and ſtructure of our Bodies, before we were capable of reſiſting him; he hath fitted us to be ſociable, though he hath left it to us, to chuſe whether we will be ſociable or not. And we need not wonder at this, ſince in like manner all Men are capable of becoming holy, but may chuſe or refuſe to be ſo.

AGAIN, God, who is the Author and Commander of Nature, conſider'd abſtractedly from corruption, ſteers her courſe. Now the nature of the Inanimate World being reſtrain'd from liberty and choice, muſt be wholly guided by that Infinite Mind, who is the Spirit and Energy which turns all theſe Orbs of Matter on their proper hinges; and as thoſe things cannot revolt from the conduct of their nature, ſo their nature is not capable of being deprav'd, or deviating from the will of its Author; but (as we ſaid before) the

the Author of nature in its Primitive ſtate is God, and if ſhe continues ſo, he is ſtill her counſellor; but the nature of Inanimate things cannot but continue ſo and abide in its pure and Primitive ſtate, for as no Subject can turn Traytor to his Prince, before he hath an inclination to do ſo, ſo neither can the nature of theſe things rebell againſt him, becauſe ſhe is not ſo much as capable of willing otherwiſe than he will, and therefore ſhe muſt neceſſarily act as God would have her, but ſince ſhe always acts according to his will, ſhe muſt needs always act well. And therefore 'tis our wiſdom, who can act as we pleaſe, to imitate nature in thoſe things which ſhe doth in obedience to God's will; becauſe by following nature in ſuch things, we do as ſurely obey God, (who doth admoniſh us by nature) as thoſe Subjects do obey their Prince, who obey the Commands of Loyal Vicegerents; for the nature of thoſe things is God's Deputy. But we ſee that theſe things conſtantly adhere together in a friendly and uniform

uniform Conſociation and do not ſeparate; now ſince in this they *fulfil* the *word* of God; what are the bleſſed Fruits of this their Concord, but ſo many legible Characters written by the Divine Finger, as Exhortations to Sociableneſs and Unity, for our Inſtruction? and therefore we ought no longer to contemn Nature's adviſing us to be ſociable, ſince ſhe therein obeyeth the Will of God, who is both hers and our Maſter.

2. SINCE Man is by nature a ſociable Creature, we may reaſonably inferr, That he is liable to be called to an Account for his Sociableneſs.

All men think it very juſt, that he who intruſts Men with their ſeveral degrees of Wit, Judgment, Strength, *&c.* may exact an Account from them, how they have improved theſe natural Talents; for indeed ſince Man is endued with Liberty of Will and Reaſon, whereby he is enabled to manage his Faculties as he pleaſes, and is capable withal of giving an Account of himſelf, why ſhould any one think it otherwiſe?

otherwiſe? For though the God of Nature hath left it to our choice, either to make the beſt uſe of theſe Faculties, or not; yet it doth not follow thence, that he is not concern'd, whether we improve them ſo or no; no ſurely, for this would reflect upon his Wiſdom, as if we would throw away Gifts at random, which 'tis no great matter of moment what ſort of Uſe we make of. Wherefore, as we are tender to entertain worthy Thoughts of his Divine Providence, we muſt not think that he will not demand an Account from us how we have employed our natural Endowments; but if we ſhall be required to give an Account of our natural Talents, then we are accountable for our ſociable Capacity; becauſe Sociableneſs is a Gift of Nature, as well as any other. Therefore 'tis very dangerous to make no uſe of our ſociable Faculties, for if we are accountable for our capacity of being ſociable; then thoſe who have made little or no Uſe of their natural Sociableneſs, cannot give a laudable

Account

account of themſelves in this reſpect; becauſe by neglecting to exerciſe this gift of nature, they affront both nature, and the God of nature; they deſpiſe his Liberality, who ungratefully rob themſelves and others of the many comforts which flow from our Sociableneſs rightly managed. In a word, who exempt themſelves from their obligation to diſcharge freely and fully their relative duties of life; which the faireſt Laws of Juſtice and Gratitude challenge from them as Sociable Creatures: Since therefore even thoſe who have been conducted by the light of nature, have always reſented very odiouſly a careleſs neglect of the faculties of our minds (till they ruſt again for want of uſe) as the fault of a ſluggiſh temper; we may for good reaſons conclude, that thoſe who through the terrible foreſight of the neceſſity and difficulty of performing their Social offices, yield ſo far to a ſlothful humour (or worſe incitements) as to fly humane Society, are blame-worthy, both in the judgment of God and men;

for unleſs men are vanquiſht by a droniſh principle of ſtupidity, how can they ſo contentedly ſtoop below the dignity of their nature, as to take up their habitation with the dumb beaſts in private lurking-holes; and under the grave pretence of leading a contemplative life, palliate their continual idleneſs; and (if we may ſo ſay) immoderately glut themſelves with a ſpiritual ſenſuality.

BUT ſuppoſing that this practice of habitual ſolitude, doth not proceed from ſuch a vile cauſe; yet 'tis probable, that it doth take its riſe from the other extreme, which is far worſe, *viz.* arrogance; which mens minds are blown up with by their ambition, to attempt the invaſion of thoſe glorious tracts of greatneſs, ſublimity and perfection; which far ſurmount the moſt eminent height, our nature can poſſibly arrive to, and entertain ſuch high opinions of their wiſdom, as to ſcorn the ſociety of thoſe who are partners of their own nature; who look upon their own brains as a Granary furniſh-

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ed with diſcretion enough to diſtinguiſh the proper paſſages which we muſt walk through in the diſtracting labyrinth of an uncertain life; wherein we are bewildred with ſo many thorny doubts and ſcruples; and think that they have no debts to pay off to Men, or occaſion of their neighbours help: What do theſe Men do but aſcend into the Throne of God, and exalt themſelves above the Stars of the moſt high? So true is that ingenious Sentence of *Ariſtotle*. "He "who is not able to "communicate, or wants "nothing through his "ſelf-ſufficiency, is no "part of a Common-"Wealth, inaſmuch as he muſt be ei-"ther a Beaſt or a God.

* Ὁ ᾧ μὴ δυνάμενος κοινωνεῖν, ἢ μηδὲν δεόμενος δι' αὐτάρκειαν, οὐδὲν μέρος πόλεως, ὥστε ἢ θηρίον ἢ θεός. De repub. lib. 1.

But alas! ſilly Creatures, whilſt they vote themſelves in their own Opinions as Gods, others compare them to the Beaſts which periſh; for truly univerſal Experience may inform us that a ſolitary way of Living maketh Men ſalvage, and moroſe; and ſtrips

them of that native candour, which is one of their greateſt Ornaments.

THIS ſurely is enough to convince men, that not to be ſociable is a Fault for which we ſhall be judged; and to confute the vain Errour of ſome Philoſophers of old, who placed a great deal of Vertue in a melancholy and recluſe Life: For (not to urge now what we have already proved, that 'tis a Fault) may we not with as good Reaſon conclude that the Tortoiſe is a better Fiſh than others, becauſe it is always roofed within its Shell (which would be very ridiculous) as that thoſe Philoſophers were the more vertuous becauſe they lock'd and barr'd themſelves in their private Cells from humane Society, that they might the more leiſurely hunt after a few nice, jejune, abſtruſe, and trifling Speculations; and ſacrifice to them all thoſe happy opportunities which might with Honour and Advantage be beſtowed upon the Exerciſe of the moſt communicative and diffuſive Vertues; and ſuch which would highly advance our

ſociable

ſociable Capacity, in order to our giving a chearful account of that and all other natural Faculties; (*viz.*) that we have promoted our own and others good with them; which is certainly much better than to let looſe the Reins of our Curioſity ſo far as to ſpend all our time in the eager purſuit of empty Notions which cloud the Heads of thoſe who invent them, with unwholſome Vapours, and peſter others with their Novelty.

BUT there are other perſons, who are in Danger of giving a very ſorry Account of the Uſe of their natural Sociableneſs; and thoſe are quite contrary to the former; for as they ruſh into an unaccountable Error, by abandoning, without any Diſtinction, all humane Society: So theſe plunge themſelves into as dangerous a State, by a giddy, extravagant, and over frequent uſe of their Sociableneſs; which extreme is every whit as pernicious (not to ſay more) than the other.

FOR since Nature hath given us no Faculty, but what she did design us to exercise in order to improve it; but hath so contemper'd the Use and Offices of all her Gifts, that an immoderate Satiety of one might not offend and hinder the Enjoyment, and progress of another; and since Thinking is a Faculty which Man receiveth from his rational (which is his most noble) Nature, we ought not to immerse our selves so far in Conversation, as to deprive our selves of convenient Seasons for Thinking; because Thinking is the most excellent means whereby we are brought to an intimate Acquaintance with God, and our selves; which is absolutely necessary to instruct us, how to regulate our sociable Capacity, how to govern our Passions and Affections in Conversation; without it our Minds cannot be furnished with a rich Store of Knowledge and Wisdom; through the want of which we shall be useless, if not hurtful in the exercise of our sociable Faculties; which will marr the end for which Nature made us sociable,

ſociable, (*viz.*) to benefit others, by imparting our Thoughts, and to relax our minds, when they are wearied with intenſe Thinking; a moderate and orderly Uſe of which, will raviſh the greateſt part of our Lives with Heavenly Delights; but if our cogitative Faculty lies fallow, and untilled, how can one reap any Fruit from our Sociableneſs? For can Men gather Grapes of Thorns, or Figs of Thiſtles? or how can we refreſh our minds with ſociable entertainments, when, by neglecting to retire within our ſelves, and to think we cloy our ſelves with Converſation; which by this means is rather a Burthen than a pleaſure to our Nature, becauſe all Extreams oppreſs and break it?

NOW therefore, ſince the Counſels and Preparations of our Retirement, are ſo ſerviceable, to ſeaſon and bridle our Tongues in Converſation; and ſince our Nature is galled and fretted under the tedious Diſcipline of either Faculties, 'tis our Wiſdom, neither to be over thoughtful, nor over ſociable;

and to keep an exact Calendar of the proper Terms both of Retirement and Sociableneſs; leaſt we plot againſt our own Comfort, and Nature's good Will, (who is too liberal to confine us to one Delight) by not mingling them equally together: For as thoſe who macerate themſelves with aſſiduous Thoughtfulneſs (though their minds may pitch upon the beſt Objects) yet, ever and anon, wander from them into vain Imaginations; ſo thoſe who inceſſantly engage themſelves in Company (ſuppoſing their Companions are good) too often are expoſed, for the ſake of Diſcourſe, to grow laviſh, and not choice of their Words, (being not guarded with a ſufficient Train of Thoughts) till they uſe their ſociable Faculties as Sluces of Filth and Vanity.

WE need not add, that we ſhall be judged for ſuch Speeches; but if we ſhall be judged for them, we ſhall be alſo judged for our immoderate Sociableneſs (which trapans us into them) if we perſiſt in it. We thought fit to ſpeak

ſpeak the longer againſt it, becauſe this is an epidemical Diſtemper.

And now we may paſs on to conſider what a diſmal Account thoſe muſt give of themſelves, who imploy their Sociableneſs in the promotion of Intemperance and Debauchery, if we are accountable for our ſociableneſs: For ſince Sociableneſs is a gift of Nature, (who is but God's Burſer) and ſince God muſt be altogether good, unleſs he ceaſe to be God, and cannot be altogether good, unleſs he always encourageth Goodneſs; and cannot always encourage Goodneſs unleſs he is a diſcourager of all manner of Wickedneſs: we may conclude that all our natural Faculties and Abilities are ſent by him to be ply'd as ſo many Engines and Inſtruments of Vertue; which is the Rectitude and higheſt Exaltation of humane Nature: and therefore our ſociable Faculties being conveyed from his Goodneſs by the Hands of Nature, muſt be deſigned both by God and Nature (who wills as he wills) to miniſter to Vertue, and not to Vice; for Vice being an Abaſement of our Nature,

Nature and leading us to Ruin, muſt be ſuppoſed to be an Enemy to Nature (who agreeing with the Divine Benevolence cannot but conſult our honour and ſafety) therefore in making us ſociable, ſhe deſigned us to be ſociable to the beſt ends and purpoſes, and in ſuch uſeful things, wherein we may moſt advantageouſly and longeſt continue ſo.

THIS may ſuffice to baffle the malicious Logick of ſome, who pay ſo much homage to their ſenſual Appetites, and Luſts, as to inferr, becauſe we are ſociable by nature, that therefore, rather than (to ſpeak in their dialect) ſpoil good Company, we ought to comply with their Vices, and transform our ſelves into Swine, by an immoderate Uſe of the Creatures: for indeed Intemperance is a *Circe* which inchanteth and bewitcheth Men, and diveſts them of all that is humane, and is a Vice which, by overloading our Conſtitution with its Offenſive Crapula's, (for theſe are the rife Fruits of it) haſtens our Death: Whence it manifeſtly appears, that ſuch

ſuch Vices are contrary to the ends of our Sociableneſs, and to refuſe Society with any one upon ſuch Accounts is not diſpleaſing to Nature.

AND therefore, if you are at any time tempted for the ſake of good Nature, or natural Sociableneſs to ſtay in ſuch Company, you may readily fortify your ſelf againſt it, by conſidering that a Principle of Sociableneſs is inſtilled into us by Nature to ſpur on one another to what is laudable, and tending to our Safety; becauſe in theſe Caſes we want Help.

BUT as for thoſe Practices which forward our Ruine we do not want Aſſiſtance, 'tis an eaſy thing to undo our ſelves, we can ruin our ſelves without help;

Facilis deſcenſus Averni. Virg.

So that Partners in Ebriety, are no more obliged to one anothers Courteſy, than any one who is ready to fall off a great Promontory for a Puſh from a Stander by, which will unavoidably hurl him headlong

headlong into the Sea; becauſe he will prodigally throw away his Life with him too.

BUT do's the Caſe ſtand ſo? then we may eaſily preſage, what a heavy Reckoning ſome Men will have to make, one day, for their Sociableneſs: But we will leave them now for the preſent, and ſhutting up this Inference with an Advice to them all, to make the beſt Uſe of their Sociableneſs, go forward.

3. If Man is by nature a ſociable Creature, we may inferr, that Sociableneſs is very pleaſant, becauſe all natural Gifts are pleaſant; and if they are temperately, and well uſed, they fill our minds with Rivers of Pleaſure; but if we uſe them otherwiſe 'tis our own Fault, becauſe we poiſon and embitter the ſweet and wholeſom Springs of Nature: The great Delight which all men take in enjoying the Company of thoſe whom they like, according as their habitual Diſpoſition is bad or good, may ſufficiently witneſs the truth of this Inference; but though the preſence

ſence of any Perſons who agree in Temper is very Delicious in Converſation, yet the ſolid and durable pleaſures of Sociableneſs depend upon our ſteering it aright: thoſe therefore who abuſe their ſociable Faculties loſe their Share of its ſubſtantial Joys and joins Reflections. 'Tis a great Pleaſure to caſt an Eye back upon the real good we do others by our Counſels, the communicating to them the riches of our minds, the hiſtory of our Experience, and the Fruits of our Thinking and Contemplation. 'Tis pleaſant to think that we depend upon ſomewhat more than the ſmall Stock of our own Knowledge. 'Tis pleaſant for our Judgment to rectify and be rectified. 'Tis pleaſant to obſerve how our Judgments and Opinions in weighty Matters often very readily claſp together.

But if Sociablenſs is ſo pleaſant, this Motive may reinforce, what we ſaid before, to thoſe, who do in a manner deſert humane Society, and excuſe themſelves with their fear of tranſgreſſing Nature's Bounds in Converſation; for

for we ſhould not fall into one Extreme to avoid another: Nature, who hath beſtowed this and other Faculties on us, hath given us Ability to manage them well if we will, and if we grudge a little Care to prevent our miſuſing the Gift; ſuch a ſlight Pretence will not mantle our Fault of running into the other Extreme.

BUT to finiſh the Point, let us intreat thoſe, who hitherto have been ſeeking after Wiſdom in the wild Foreſts and the deſolate Tops of Mountains, to decide the Controverſy, by, at length, hearkning to Wiſdom, *that crys without, and utters her voice in the ſtreets, that crys aloud and ſpares not in the opening of the City gates, and in the places of concourſe*: they might by this means find out ſome good Companions, and, from the pleaſant Guſt of their profitable Society, after Tryal, be forc'd to confeſs, that *two are better than one, becauſe they have a good Reward for their Labour; for if they fall, the one will lift up his Fellow; but woe to him that is alone, for when*

when he falls he hath not another to lift him up.

4. IF Man is by nature a ſociable Creature, then Sociableneſs being a Good which we receive from Nature, thoſe who are endowed with a more graceful Preſence, winning Application, volubility of Tongue, or any other Gifts, which endear and adorn Converſation, ought not to be proud of them: For though theſe muſt be improved by Art and Exerciſe before they can be of great uſe, yet Nature, who has made all men ſociable, has furniſh'd ſome men more, with the Habiliments which are proper for excelling in Converſation, than others: Some men are far better Rhetoricians, more courteous and affable, and the like, by nature than others; therefore if men who are equipp'd by Nature, as ſoon as they enter into the World, with a keener Wit, and a more piercing Judgment, or ſuch like than their Fellows, they ought not to vaunt themſelves upon the Account of them; becauſe they are but the Heirs and Favorites

rites of her more liberal Hand, which they were not capable of meriting before they exiſted: For the ſame Reaſon, thoſe who are better qualified by Nature for the Improvement of their Sociableneſs, ſhould not think the higher of themſelves for it; but rather daſh in pieces all proud Thoughts, whilſt they are in the Egg-ſhell, by conſidering that they are borrowed Ornaments, and unleſs they are uſed as Nature deſigned, a more dreadful Reckoning upon the Account of them draws near.

5. AND laſtly, from Man's being a ſociable Creature by nature, we may be inſtructed that 'tis our Duty to thank God for our Sociableneſs: for ſince all the Gifts of Nature come from God, and ſince Sociableneſs is a Gift of Nature, we ought to give him Thanks for it, becauſe we are obliged to acknowledge to him with Humility, Admiration and Thankſgivings, all the Gifts of Nature, of which his Divine Wiſdom and Power are the prime Source and Original.

BUT

BUT that we may excite you to, and quicken you the more in the Performance of this Duty, we will endeavour to ſhew you the great Bleſſings which accrew to mankind, from our natural Sociableneſs; and which we may reaſonably gueſs, were the ends and Reaſons, for which God the Creatour, and Nature the common Mother of all things, made men to be ſociable.

1. THEN we obſerve, that the Accompliſhment of great Undertakings are owing to humane Sociableneſs.

THE ſtrength and prudence of ſingle Perſons is very little, ſo that had not men been ſociable, through the ſhortneſs of our Lives, no extraordinary Attempts had ever been brought to Perfection, all magnificent Works would have hung maimed and imperfect: Private Prudence is very ſcanty and narrow, and after a little Exerciſe grows dim, and ſhort-ſighted at all times, but 'tis eſpecially apt to overlook its own Defects: In like manner, private Strength is ſoon exhauſted:

But the united Prudence of many, marks out Business with a straiter Rule, spies out presently a wry Line in the first Model, and with expedition corrects the Scheme; so also the allied Forces of many Hands add Sinews and Nerves to strengthen an Undertaking: And besides, the Emulation of Coadjutors inspires one another with Chearfulness and earnest Ardency of Excelling.

Ζηλοῖ δέ τε γείτονα γείτων ἀγαθὴ δ' ἔρις ἥδε βροτοῖσι. Hes.

AS for Instance, the whole habitable Parts of the World have been conquered by confederate Forces, by those Nations who have rescued their Rights, Laws, Liberties, Possessions and Lives, from the Insolence of their Enemies. Most useful Arts have flourished so very much by the Consociations of those who profess Skill in them; thus stately Palaces have been erected, and varieties of ingenious Machines invented, which either serve for Use or Ornament in the Commonwealth.

MORE-

MOREOVER, we of this Kingdom are indebted to the Combinations of the Learned for the late Advancement of Philoſophy and Sciences. The Senſe of this moved our Anceſtors to found Publick Schools and Colleges, and to ſettle ſuch handſom Revenues on them, for the Encouragement of thoſe who are members of them, that they may prove conſtant and fruitful Seminaries of Wiſdom and good Literature, that many young Plants might be watered there with all ſeaſonable Knowledge, by the Care and Inſpection of their Tutors and Governours. Here our young Students are thruſt forward by each others exemplary Diligence to raiſe a laudable Emulation in one anothers Breaſts, to blow up their almoſt buried ſparks of Generoſity and Knowledge, and to poliſh the rough Draught of Nature's Work: And oh! that all who are ſeated ſo commodiouſly as to enjoy the Opportunity of an Academick Station would improve themſelves by ſerious and conſtant Study, and would joyn

their Heads together to conſult about the beſt Methods, and the Difficulties to be ſtruggled with before we can make a worthy proficiency in Learning, and diſtribute together in common their Gifts and Abilities, but eſpecially to be helpful to thoſe who are backward; ſuch Practices would prove better than epiſtolary Recommendations, 'twould manifeſt, that they deſire to be grateful both to God and Men, for indeed 'twould be a Tranſcript of the Beneficence of their deceaſed Friends and Benefactors.

BUT 'tis time for us to haſten, and therefore for a while we leave them.

2. MEN'S natural Sociableneſs engages them to be the more juſt and honeſt, courteous and compaſſionate.

FOR their mutual Dependence, twiſting their Intereſts ſo cloſe together, and their natural Inſtinct to Sociableneſs being ſo impetuous, Men very lovingly, and with Delight, ſtrike Contracts of Friendſhip and Unity, and by the magnetiek Force of this Principle,

Principle, their parallel Hopes and Fears center to the common Good. None can think hard of the Philoſopher's Maxim, "*That "we are not born only "for our ſelves, but "our Country, Parents "and Friends, all of "them claim a Share in "our Birth. Since all walk by the ſame meaſures; we have all a Right and Title to a part of the publick Exchequer, to which we are bound to contribute ſomewhat; and unleſs we were link'd together in Unity, by the univerſal Chain of our natural Sociableneſs, the Prudence and Strength, of ſuch a vaſt Company of Creatures, running in contrary and diſtinct Channels, would be very weak, but ſtrong enough to deſtroy us; every Man would be every Man's Enemy: So that if that one Branch of the *Malmesbury Philoſophy* were true, *That we are not ſociable by nature*, our Minds would be continually raging with Projects of Violence,

* *Sed quoniam (ut præclarè ſcriptum eſt à* Platone) *non nobis ſolum nati ſumus, ortuſque noſtri partem patria vendicat, partem parentes, partem amici.* Cic *de off. lib.* 1.

Bloud and Revenge, our Resolutions clad with Thoughts of Destiny and Slaughter, our Tongues would be always belching and spitting Satyrs and Invectives, Menaces and Curses, against one another, our Hearts would be a constant Harbour of Malice and Envy, and our Hands incessantly would be arm'd with Daggers, and Instruments of Cruelty; for all such barbarous Tempers and Practices are contrary to our natural Sociableness. Sourness, tumultous Passions, and Terror proceed from our Disobeying our natural Sociableness; if therefore Love and Unity, Concord and Peaceableness, Meekness and Clemency are laudable Vertues, and so Beneficial to Mankind; then surely our natural Sociableness is a great Blessing, and such a one for which we ought to give hearty Thanks to Almighty God our Creatour, which throughly considered will give our Reader a very ready Apology for our dwelling so long upon this Topick, (*viz.*) that Man is by Nature a sociable Creature.

SECT.

SECT. 2.

Man proved to be a Sociable Creature, more peculiarly in Religious Matters, from Nature and reveal'd Religion.

THOUGH Man, as hath been demonſtrated already, is a Creature adapted by nature to be ſociable in all things, yet he is more peculiarly fitted and intended by Nature to be ſociable in Religious matters.

FOR 1. Since, as hath been lately ſhewn, one main End for which Nature made Man ſociable was, That he might not want what Aſſiſtance the united Policy and Abilities of many can afford, to the Completion of the moſt difficult and excellent Undertakings; and ſince a great deal of Wiſdom and Pains is neceſſary to our Attainment of a competent Advancement in Religion and Vertue; which is the moſt valuable of all our Undertakings in the ſight of God; and ſince Nature's

Will concurrs with the Divine Will, we may ſafely venture to conclude, that Nature made us ſociable moſtly with this Intent, that we might direct and hearten one another in religious Offices, and the chearful uſe of all thoſe means whereby we are inſenſibly forwarded in our Purſuit after Perfection in Vertue and Holineſs; and certainly there is a great neceſſity for our Sociableneſs in Divine matters: for when a man conſults himſelf only about religious Duties he proves his own *Judas*; and though all the other Creatures do unanimouſly and chearfully miniſter Supplies for our bodily Suſtenance, yet for the moſt part they hinder and clog us in our ſpiritual Concerns, tempting us to be careleſs of our Souls; for alas! how many indulge themſelves in an exorbitant Uſe of thoſe whoſe Subſtance are our Food? How many abuſe the Clothing, and ſoft Beds, which we borrow from them, to Effeminacy, Luſt, Luxury, Pride, Sloth, and Laſciviouſneſs? The Devils and thoſe malignant Inhabitants below, day and night

night are hatching the Ruin of Mankind; therefore ſince we are invironed on all ſides with Snares, God and Nature who are the ſincere Friends and Well-wiſhers of Men, without doubt, deſigned us chiefly to employ our Sociableneſs in religious Matters; well knowing, that if men prove treacherous to one another, and would not encourage one another to labour after Vertue, that we ſhould be in great danger of hardly ever getting a ſufficient meaſure of it; for 'tis but reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that they allow the moſt Ammunition for our holding out in that Work, which wants moſt, and which, if it ſhould fail, would ſeem to beſpatter God's own Honour.

2. THAT Man is more peculiarly fitted by nature to be ſociable in religious Matters, will appear from men's Equality by Creation.

'TIS very neceſſary that men ſhould be diſtinguiſhed by their Birth, Wealth, Learning, and the like, in the civil Affairs of this Life; and upon theſe accounts we may very lawfully preferr

ferr one before another, becauſe many Conveniencies in Governments, and the publick Bodies of Kingdoms proceed from it, and therefore a prudent proportioning of our outward reſpect to Men, according to their Inequality, in ſuch Reſpects, ought to be obſerved; for without them there would be a worſe Declenſion of Modeſty, and good Order amongſt us than there is already.

BUT nevertheleſs, Men conſidered abſtractedly as Creatures, are all equal; and therefore, when we appear before God the Creatour and Judge of all men, who is no Accepter of Perſons, we are all equal; high and low, rich and poor, the unwiſe and the learned Judges of the Earth, one with another, muſt worſhip God with Proſtration of Soul and Body, and be all cloathed with the moſt profound Humility; for ſurely if we attentively meditate upon him we ſhall loſe all ſelf, all the ſilly Relations we bear in this World, and wholly be devoured with the Contemplation of his Majeſty and Perfections; for why? Promotion comes

comes neither from the East, nor from the West, no nor yet from the South; but 'tis God that puts down one and sets up another, he gives all one entrance into the world: We are in his hand as the Clay in the hands of the Potter:

*τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν *Act. 17.
Εἰς δ' ἔς' αὐτογενής ἑνὸς ἔκγονα 28.
πάντα τέτυκται. Orpheus.

Now therefore since we are all his Creatures and Off-spring, whatever alterations some external circumstances may make in the opinions of men, yet, they make none in God's; for what can one man bribe the Lord with, that he should respect him any more than another? The Earth is the Lord's, and all that is therein; therefore in his service we stand all upon the level, the greatest Emperors and Potentates adore and obey their Creator, and so doth the meanest Peasant too; but if they are equal in their observance of Religious Duties, then they are exactly qualified for the performing of them together, for nothing can qualifie men more for Sociableness than Equality.

3. The

3. The universal and innate Idea which all men have of a Being, which deserves worship and veneration, bespeaks men to be sociable in Religious Exercises.

Now that the Idea of such a being which we call God is grafted in our minds by nature, we conceive to be true, because even the illiterate are accompanied with this notion into the world. Now 'tis certain, that they do not deduce it by strength of Reason, or are deluded meerly with Metaphysical niceties; therefore it must be natural; but if any one should imagine, that 'tis only a vulgar error, let them resolve us, why those who have thought most, have believ'd it most steadily; and again, why so many Wit Laureats of our age, have still stuck in hesitancy, and a shrewd suspicion of the truth of it, when their vices have sollicited them to shake hands with this notion with all their hearts, and they have been fain to drown it by heaping debauch upon debauch, before they could extinguish for a few moments this

this truth ; which like a fire always torments them, by putting their Conſciences into a paſſion, till it raves like a fury againſt their wickedneſs? And indeed 'tis no wonder that a ſenſual mind, whilſt it ſwims in an Ocean of intemperate waves preſſing on the back of one another, ſhould be mocked with a ſwaggering and tranſitory disbelief of a God ; ſince ſuch debaucheries drive away reaſon, and all that is humane out of men, not only turning the proper motions of our bodies out of their courſe, but alſo corrupting the Sentiments of the minds which are lodg'd in bodies thus abuſed. Wherefore if there are ſome Idiots, who are to be reckoned as monſters among men, and others who have metamorphos'd themſelves into ſuch monſters ; we ought not for the ſake of ſuch exceptions, to deny the validity of a general Rule ; for any thing is natural which agrees with the common ſtate of nature, and therefore to argue againſt a truth prov'd in that method, from her deviations and excreſcencies,

is

is abſurd; for ſuppoſing that nature had ever took a frolick to make ſuch a Moniſter as that hundred-handed *Briareus*, which was nouriſhed in the Poets Brains; would not every one have abominated his Impudence, or hiſs'd at his folly, who thence ſhould have took an occaſion to have maintained, that 'tis not natural for a man to have only two hands? From what hath been ſaid we ſhall take the liberty to call the Idea of God innate, and that notion univerſal which the largeſt part of Mankind own and acknowledge. Since therefore 'tis innate and univerſal, without controverſie men agree unanimouſly in the belief of a God (whatever their notions may be of his nature and attributes) and the belief of a God cannot but imply that homage and veneration is owing to him; it muſt follow then that men are hereby peculiarly fitted to be ſociable, in paying thoſe Divine Honours; which is the firſt act of Religion; for what can fit men more to be ſociable in any matter than an unanimous perſwaſion, that what they

they engage in is very excellent? But if they agree and are fit to be ſociable in the Exerciſe of Divine Worſhip, then they are fit to be ſociable in any Religious or vertuous undertakings; becauſe the notion of a God gives life and authority to our notions of Vertue; for his nature is the Touchſtone, by which we try and diſcern what is good and what is otherwiſe: Accordingly, though the Pagans entertain'd very lame and feeble conceptions of the Divine Nature, notwithſtanding the ſenſe of a Deity made them honour him in publick with rich Sacrifices; and that they might worſhip their God together, they erected very ſumptuous Temples, which they ſeparated for Religious Exerciſes; they inſtituted ſeveral Rites and Ceremonies which they obſerved ſtrictly with dread, and a holy reverence; nothing provoked them more than when they were defeated by the forces of their enemies, to ſee thoſe Sacred places profan'd and temerated with vile and common uſes;

uſes; whence it may appear, that nature invites men, and inſpires them with a natural ardency of deſiring to exert to one another the reſpect which they bear to God.

But we muſt not depend only upon nature, ſince we may eaſily inform our ſelves, how highly God approves of mens being ſociable in Religious Exerciſes from Revelation; and therefore we will now depart from the glimmering light of nature. And here we may firſt obſerve ſome cuſtoms which were among the *Jews* relating to our matter in hand: Now they beſides their Tabernacles, and their magnificent Temple had innumerable Synagogues, according to that of the *Pſalmiſt*, *They have ſaid let us deſtroy them altogether, they have burnt all the Synagogues of God in the Land.* In theſe Synagogues they met to pray and preach, and to conferr of Caſes in the Law of *Moſes*. And that they abounded with thoſe, may be clearly gathered from the mention in the New Teſtament of Synagogues in *Galilee*,

Pſalm 74. 8.

Galilee, at *Salanus*, in *Damascus*, and *Antiochia*; yea further, from that famous Tradition of their own, *Wheresoever ten men of Israel were, there ought also a Synagogue to be built.* And therefore Holy *David* saith concerning one of them, *This is the Gate of the Lord, the righteous shall enter into it.* And the stately Temple which *Solomon* built was a place, *in which they were commanded to rejoyce before the Lord their God with their Sons and Daughters, Men-servants and Maid-servants, and the Levite that was within their Gates; thither they were commanded to bring their Burnt-offerings, their Sacrifices and Tythes, and the choice of their vows before the Lord.* As if they were more acceptable to him in such a vast Assembly which always resorted to the Temple at some solemn times. And therefore King *Solomon* in his Dedication of it, after he had humbly expostulated thus, *But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold the heaven and the*

Psal. 118. 20.

Deut. 12. 11, 12.

1 King. 8. 27, 28, 29.

heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much leſs the Houſe that I have builded? Goes on: *Yet, have thou reſpect unto the prayer of thy ſervant, and to his ſupplication, O Lord my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer, which thy ſervant prayeth before thee to day; that thine eyes may be open towards this Houſe night and day, even towards the place of which thou haſt ſaid, My name ſhall be there; that thou mayeſt hearken unto the prayer which thy ſervant ſhall make towards this place.*

So that this Temple ſeemed to be built, that all the people of the earth might know that the Lord is God, and none elſe; here they reckoned God to dwell, and hence they term'd the Glory of God between the Cherubims, שכינה *Schekinah*, which ſignifieth the habitation or dwelling of God. From all which we may eaſily learn, that God enjoyn'd them to be ſociable in Religious Worſhip, and greatly delighted in their publick performance of Religious Duties.

But

But if we conſult the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, we ſhall after ſearch find that 'tis ſo far from diſcharging us from the obſervance of our Social duties, that it hath included the love of our neighbour in the love of God, and prefer'd *mercy before ſacrifice*; not only obliging *us to do good to thoſe that do good unto us*, thoſe of our own Tribe and Profeſſion; but alſo *to be given to hoſpitality, and to forgive our enemies*; it teacheth us to *render unto Cæſar the things that are Cæſar's, as unto God the things that are God's*, recommends an univerſal Charity, a ſubmiſſive and peaceable temper; all thoſe Moral and Sociable vertues commanded under the Law, are urged in the Goſpel to be practiſed more carefully.

BUT moreover, our bleſſed Saviour and his Apoſtles, who have eſtabliſhed all Social duties upon the ſureſt foundations, were illuſtriouſly eminent for encouraging our Reverent Attendance upon Publick Worſhip, which is a Sociable duty.

OUR Saviour himſelf was frequently preſent in the Temple; there his Solicitous Parents found him *hearing and asking the Doctors queſtions.* And *verſ.* 52. 'tis ſubjoyn'd, *That he increaſed in wiſdom thereupon,* he (*in whom the fulneſs of the Godhead dwelleth bodily,* Col. 2.9. that is eſſentially, not between the Cherubims as amongſt the *Iſraelites*) ſaid *Pſal.* 22. 22. (which Pſalm was written Prophetically of the bleſſed Jeſus) *I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midſt of the congregation will I praiſe thee.* And again, *verſ.* 25. *my praiſe ſhall be of thee in the great congregation, I will pay my vows before them that fear him.* And let us ſtill conſider, how the ſame Bleſſed Jeſus, the Meek and Patient Jeſus, whoſe mind was pregnant with none but the deſigns of Love; who was an utter ſtranger to rage and fury, when he ſaw his Father's Temple, the Houſe of Prayer, daily Prayer, turn'd into a Houſe of Merchandice: He did not barely reprove the Buyers and Sellers, for ſo great a crime, but us'd a Scourge

Luk. 2.46, 48.

Scourge of Authority and holy revenge. Can we reflect upon that zealous action of his, and not at the ſame time pay great reſpect to thoſe places, where the Divine Honour reſides; by remembring that our Maſter expects frequent viſits from his Diſciples there, to glorifie God together? No ſurely, that gracious promiſe of a bleſſing to two or three that ſhould gather together in his name, is a very alluring invitation, to come frequently to the Temple, and may free every one from miſtruſting that ſuch expreſſions as theſe are improper in the mouth of Chriſt: *Bleſſed is the man that watcheth daily at God's gates, and waiteth at the Poſts of his Temple. Bleſſed are they that dwell in God's houſe.*

IN conformity alſo to our Saviour's will, the Apoſtles with their Converts *continued daily with one accord in the Temple*; yea, and *ſtedfaſtly too, abode in the Doctrine, which had been delivered to them there, and in fellowſhip, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer*, Act. 2. And the pious cuſtom of Publick Wor-

ſhip hath been handed down from their practice, ſucceſſively through all the Ages of Chriſtianity to our times; which God grant we may long enjoy; for 'tis mighty advantageous to Chriſtians, and there are very great reaſons why it ſhould be continued, as it hath always hitherto been.

A S, 1. Publick Worſhip was inſtituted and is continued, becauſe hereby God is honoured and glorified in a more auguſt and ſolemn manner.

THOUGH God is the Creator of his own Excellencies, and an all Glorious Spectacle of Perfection, incircled with infinite brightneſs and ſelf-ſufficiency, ſo that he cannot but be a ſenſible ſpectator of his own Greatneſs and Majeſty, which tranſcends all capacity of being more glorious in reſpect of himſelf; yet humane ſouls whilſt they are ſhut up in theſe cottages of clay, cannot approach near the Throne of his Eſſential Glory, but muſt from the decent and uniform order of viſible things diſcern an inviſible Glorious God; which was the Author of

of them all; and becauſe a ſtrong belief of him upon this account, maketh us to revere and love him the more highly, which awful ſenſe will promote our happineſs; and ſince all happineſs flows from him, and therefore the happineſs of his Creatures cannot but redound to his honour: He hath been pleaſed to call in Scripture the ſincere veneration and ſubmiſſion of his Servants, honours done unto him; for he has ſaid, *Them that honour him he will honour.* And again, *He that honoureth me praiſeth me*; which Text implys that he looks upon acts of Worſhip (though they cannot make him more glorious in himſelf) to honour him, becauſe they make him more glorious in the eyes of men: And for this reaſon (to ſpeak after the manner of men, as he himſelf ſometimes in condeſcenſion uſeth to do) they are Incenſe to his Noſtrils, the delight and joy of his heart; and the more publickly they are perform'd, the more conſpicuous his honour is in the world. Indeed the private performance of them

would give a sufficient testimony of our gratitude and sincerity to the all-seeing God, but if we should always confine our homage to the Closet, we should seem to worship him meerly for our private interest, and the number of Gods would be equal to the number of our Tutelar Angels; that in reality every man would be accounted rather a fond slave of his particular Idol, than a happy servant and worshipper of the one God.

BUT by prostrating our selves before him in publick Congregations, we loudly proclaim that we worship a God, whom we are not ashamed to acknowledge; and in whose service we count it an honour to be engaged; that God to whom we durst not present covetous, ambitious, and selfish Petitions, or stingy and particular Gratulations and Praises, as if he were only our Benefactor. In a word, him to whom with the whole Choire of Heaven, we ascribe all Glory and Adoration, as being the sole Arbitrator of all our fates; the Universal Monarch and

and Patron, as well as the ſole and undivided Creator of the Heaven, the Earth, the Sea, and all that in them is.

PUBLICK Worſhip was inſtituted, and is continued, that the external credit of Religion may flouriſh in the world, and good order may be upheld in the Church.

RELIGION ingratiates its ſelf with good men, by their experience of its ſolid worth and excellency; but thoſe who have not reliſh'd her ſweetneſs, muſt read her amiableneſs in good examples of vertue and goodneſs; which are as ſo many breathing Statues and Semblances of Religion; for our Saviour hath charg'd his Followers *to be lights to the blind world, that they may glorifie their Father and his Father, their God and his God, which is in heaven:* But how can we glorifie God more than by meeting together in great Companies on purpoſe to glorifie him? For when men ſee that all, both ſmall and great fall down before him, they will conclude that the Earth is his Foot-

Footstool. Now we cannot promote the credit of Religion so much as by giving publick glory to God; because the glory of God is the main prop upon which the credit of Religion twining inseparably about it, must flourish; for without it, it would languish and fade away. But we may easily free this matter from doubt, for we appeal to any ones judgment, to resolve us and himself, whether or no the face and few surviving blossoms of Religion, are not owing to the at least formal observance of the Lords-day which is set apart for the Celebration of Publick Worship; and some zealous Christians who every day Worship God in publick, which opportunity none can want in *London*, where the Publick Prayers are read constantly twice a day in most Churches.

A 3*d.* reason why Publick Worship was instituted and continued, is, that the sincere Professors of *Christianity* may animate one anothers Zeal and Devotion.

THE

THE beſt Chriſtian's devout and pious warmth is apt to cool and expire, unleſs the hidden particles of Divine fire, which the Spirit of God lays up in their hearts and affections, are ſtruck and ventilated into a flame, by the Exemplary Devotion of others. So that though for a little while our hearts may be the Sacred *Penetralia* (if we may ſo ſay) of Heavenly deſires and purpoſes in our Cloſets; yet that our Lamps may be always burning, in order to our *always praiſing God*, like thoſe wiſe Servants who ſhall be bleſs'd; when the Lord finds them ſo occupied at his coming; 'tis neceſſary to recruit them with freſh ſupplies of Oyl from the Temple. For as one lighted Coal kindles a ſecond, and that a third, and ſo the flame riſes higher and higher till it fills a large Room with heat; ſo the watchful zeal of a devout Chriſtian here and there ſhames, and amends the careleſs behaviour of a neighbouring Spectator on one hand, and blows up the devotion and ardency of a humble Chriſtian on the other hand, till the biggeſt

biggest part of the whole Assembly, at least for some time, consume their vain thoughts by approaching near the Fire of the Altar; and feel the spirit of their holy wishes, which was drooping and like to have swounded away to be chear'd and revived. In a word, to reduce all to a small compass, one zealous Christian provokes his Brother's fervency in Religious Exercises, and both upbraid the Indevout with their sluggishness and ingratitude.

4. The last Reason which I shall mention, why we meet publickly to worship God together is, because 'tis the propereſt method to avert National Judgments, and to procure and return thanks for National Blessings.

A narrow spirit is not a Christian spirit: Kingdoms and Nations, and the whole World ought to be the subjects of our Prayers, as they were of *Daniel's*, *Abraham's*, and other Holy Patriarchs and Prophets; nay, publick spirits must joyn their publick Prayers together; for if we would retard and stop by violence the vengeance which

Heaven

Heaven may too juſtly be charged with againſt our wicked and profane Nation; we muſt like *Jehoſaphat* and all *Judah* ſtand before the Lord, and beſiege his compaſſion, that by the conjoint forces of hands continually lifted up in Prayers and earneſt Supplications we may force a ſurrender of Bleſſings from the God of Mercy; and take his pardon and favour by ſtorm: National Judgments cannot be averted but by National Humiliations; we muſt cry, and cry mightily too unto our God; lazy and whiſpering Petitions will never ſilence the Trumpet of Divine Wrath; but when the penitent tears and vehement Expoſtulations of vaſt multitudes wreſtle with him, who is long-ſuffering, pardoning iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin, ſuch Embaſſadors as theſe ſurely muſt needs return ſucceſsful Advocates to us, joyfully anſwer our hopes of a laſting truce, and be attended with ſhowers of bleſſings; ſince *Elias* alone could open and ſhut the Gates of Heaven with his earneſt Prayers.

NEI-

NEITHER do theſe devout Armies only guard our Country with their prevalent Interceſſions, when 'tis clouded with Calamities, alarm'd with guilty Fears, and the Inhabitants thereof lament becauſe of Diſtreſs in the day of Peſtilence, of Famine, the Sword, trembling Hearts, and the like; but they aſcend the Stairs of the Temple, when their Rivers of Tears are turn'd into Joy, and when remembring their Captivity with gladneſs, with Palms in their hands, and Songs of Deliverance juſt launching from their Lips, they lift up their Souls in Exultation and triumphing Hallelujahs into the Holy of Holies, even the higheſt Heavens; then, even then they biggen Heaven's Womb with the Seeds of their Humility, and proſtrate gratitude till 'tis impregnated with unrevealed Treaſures of Mercy; unleſs the Embryo proves abortive by reaſon of our ſins. But we muſt keep our ſelves within ſome Bounds, and therefore we will but briefly improve theſe Reaſons by drawing ſome practical Inferences from them. AND,

AND, 1. If the Advantages of publick Worſhip are ſo great, 'tis very fooliſh for any one to neglect the happy Opportunities of frequenting publick Worſhip.

LET Men no longer turn their Backs upon the Houſe of God; Oh! may they be perſuaded by the charming motives of their own Intereſt, of honouring even God himſelf, of the Peace of the Church, of being their own and publick Benefactors, to draw near unto God in his Houſe, and not ſo contentedly leave the Courts of the living God ſo ſolitary as if they were rather haunted with damned Ghoſts and Spectres than viſited with the glorious Appearance of thoſe miniſtring Spirits, who mark and applaud your Devotion there. Come hither therefore as to a magazine of Zeal and Charity, and wait in his outward Temple till you are admitted within the Veil of eternal Glory.

BUT, 2. If the Advantages of publick Worſhip are ſo great, we ſhould not think it ſufficient to go to Church often,

often, but we ſhould alſo take care to qualify our ſelves ſo beforehand, that our Deportment there may be ſuch as becometh us in a place where the great God is ſo immediately preſent.

EXCITED Zeal, deep Humility, ſublimated Affections, Elevation of Spirit, a diffuſive Charity, edified Neighbours, and a glorified God, are the rich and heavenly Harveſt of thoſe Souls who frequent the Temple in a due manner. But at what a wide Diſtance from theſe are laſcivious Eyes, wandring Thoughts, malicious Hearts, proud Spirits, earthly Affections, and cheriſh'd Follies? Theſe ſurely ought not to thrive there; they are not Gifts fit to be offered to God in his Houſe: theſe can never be Sacrifices well pleaſing in the ſight of a pure and unſpotted Majeſty; the great Apoſtle once queſtioned the *Corinthians* thus; *Have ye not houſes to eat and drink in, or deſpiſe ye the Church of God?* We may ask thoſe who now adays profanely trample upon his Courts, whether the Stews, the Theatre, the Market and

and the Temple are all alike? The Practice of too many of our modern Worſhippers too fatally vindicates the Abſurdneſs of this Query. But oh! may all ſuch Chriſtian Profeſſors for the future guide their feet into the Houſe of God with a ſtricter Reverence: Oh! that that they would never enter into it without ſtarting back awfully, and ſoftly ſpeaking thus to themſelves, Surely the Lord is in this Place, the Houſe of God muſt needs be the Gates of Heaven, though I unhappy Creature knew it not before. If I approach this Mercy-ſeat as I ought, the King of Glory will enter into me, and make his Abode with me.

IF this motive is not ſufficient, we'll fling away but one Argument more; if 'tis poſſible, that the other ſhould not prevail upon the inconſiderate Worſhipper to comply with this our Exhortation. And that is, the Conſideration of what a dreadful thing it is to fall into the Hands of an offended God; the God of the living Spirits, not of thoſe dead Worſhippers, whoſe

ſmall drops of Devotion freeze upon their lips; a God who will lightly eſteem thoſe who deſpiſe him; but alas! that expreſſion is a *Meioſis*; for he knows how to retort your ſtrange fire, which is an abomination to him, with overwhelming deſtruction upon you, as when of old he was provok'd to indignation, he did upon the heads of *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*, who were devoured by the Jaws of the Earth. Be therefore perſwaded, turn away your eyes from beholding vanity, and live, why will ye die in the Sanctuary of our God, who delights not in the death of a ſinner, but rather would that he return unto him and be ſaved?

But we cannot diſmiſs this ſubject, without taking notice, that ſince the unity of Congregational Prayers are ſo advantageous to the Kingdom, that 'tis neceſſary for all Publick Aſſemblies to uſe a Form of Prayer.

Publick Prayers muſt be ſuited to publick neceſſities, and not to the private caſes of particular perſons; but 'tis

'tis eaſie to compoſe Prayers proper for publick occaſions, and our Liturgy is furniſht with Prayers fit to be us'd in all conditions that a Kingdom is liable to be in; and therefore how dare any one to refuſe to joyn with us in the uſe of them? for how can our wiſhes and vows be unanimous in the behalf of *Jeruſalem*? How can they pray heartily that ſhe may proſper with peace within her borders, and plenteouſneſs within her Palaces? How can they all in a vaſt Aſſembly, ſpeak the ſame thing where they don't uſe a known ſet-form of words? What is a Congregation but a confuſed multitude without it, which like the curſed Builders of *Babel* beſeech God with divided tongues, ſighs of ignorance, jarring ſilence, diſtracted aſſents, and foment breaches and diviſions in mock-poſtures of unity there, where nothing but a generous ſpirit ſhould reign?

Let thoſe conſider of this, and tremble, who addreſs themſelves raſhly and inconſiderately to the God of Heaven; when they will not venture to deliver

a diſcourſe to the meaneſt Auditories which they have not ſtudied for; and I here by the way take notice, that Prayer is a more weighty part of publick Worſhip than preaching, though leſs regarded by thoſe, who delight rather to hear and be amuſed with Novelties, than in th' plain way which ſome call Hereſie, to worſhip the God of their Fathers, who is what he is, unchangeable, the ſame yeſterday, to day, and for ever. God bleſſed for ever, who in ſhort takes more pleaſure in the ſervice of thoſe who worſhip him in ſpirit and truth, and with all decent lowlineſs of body too, than in new coin'd appellations; for can we indulge our bodies in lazy and ſlovenly geſtures, when our ſpirits which are far more excellent, muſt be devoted to him with all reſignation and chearfulneſs? No ſurely.

3. And laſtly we may inferr, if ſo many reaſons may be alledg'd for publick Worſhip, in order to prove its advantageouſneſs, that Sociableneſs is very beneficial in Religious matters, if a

a right uſe be made of it; ſince the Publick Worſhip which is a duty of a Sociable nature, if frequented with due veneration, is ſo highly uſeful and important; which inference hath the neareſt relation to our purpoſe.

SECT. III.

WHerein Chriſtians are proved to be deſign'd by our Saviour to be Sociable in Religious matters, from his inſtitution of a Catholick Church.

Having already prov'd, that 'tis every Chriſtians obligation to be Sociable in Religious matters, from the conſtant exerciſe of Publick Worſhip in all Ages of Chriſtianity, and the great advantages which proceed from it: we come now to enforce this Doctrine of Sociableneſs in Religious performances, with our Saviour's inſtitution of a Catholick Church.

Now that Chriſt hath founded a Catholick Church, may be gather'd from thoſe words of his, *Upon this*

Rock will I build my Church, which cannot be expounded of any particular Church, without offering a diſparagement to him, and his Religion; for we muſt ſuppoſe that which he calls his Church, to be a Church of the largeſt extent, ſuch a Church which may correſpond, for its greatneſs, and Dominion, with the many glorious Prophecies which are related in the old Teſtament concerning him and his Church.

And therefore, as St. *Paul* argues, (namely becauſe *there is one body*, or one Catholick Church), *Epheſ.* 4. 5, 8, 11, 12, 13. *When our Saviour aſcended up on high, he gave ſome Apoſtles (who ordained Elders in every Church) and ſome Paſtors, and ſome Prophets, and ſome Evangeliſts, and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Miniſtry, for the edifying of this Body of Chriſt, till we all come*, &c. And *verſ.* 15*th.* he tells us that *Chriſt is the head of it*; which he brought as a motive to unity. Now unity being the chief ligament of Sociableneſs, in uſing

it

it to induce them to unity, he did in effect inferr from thence their obligation to Sociableneſs. Thence he goes on in the ſame Chapter to ſhew the neceſſity of theſe Methods, till they were united in perfection to their Glorious Head.

But we need not take much pains to prove this, ſince 'tis a great piece of Hypocriſie to deny it, in as much as we are all Baptiz'd into this Catholick Church; for *there is one Baptiſm*, and we all profeſs to believe it, for 'tis a diſtinct Article of our Creed, and therefore according to our deſign we will only deduce two or three Practical Inferences from it.

1. Then we may inferr, That General Councils are very agreeable with our Saviour's will, for his inſtitution of a Catholick Church recommends (if it were poſſible) an Univerſal Sociableneſs among all Chriſtians; but ſince in this world we cannot foreſee, how ſuch a glorious ſight ſhould ever happen, it behoveth Chriſtians to contrive, to come up the neareſt to ſuch

an Univerſal Sociableneſs as they can.

Thus the Apoſtles and Elders aſſembled together at *Jeruſalem*, that they might compoſe a difference, which aroſe in their time concerning the Converted Gentiles, *Act.* 15. In like manner, when the Chriſtian Religion began to ſpread abroad in the world, and had the Emperour *Conſtantine* (and other Chriſtian Princes after him) for its Nurſing Father; Oecumenical and General Councils were gather'd together; for he Congregated a vaſt Synod from all parts of *Chriſtendom*, even the moſt diſtant; for that Gracious Emperor and the holy Fathers of all National Churches, found the Government of the Eccleſiaſtical Polity, to be too heavy for the bare ſhoulders of National Synods; becauſe irregularities creep inſenſibly, and very faſt into the beſt Eccleſiaſtical Conſtitutions, publick enemies impugning it from without, and private Hereſies infeſting it within, their Cenſures were in danger of loſing their authority, and their

their Councils might be eaſily ſupplanted; and well knowing, that private ambition, could not attain its deſigns in ſuch a vaſt Aſſembly, and that faction and prejudice would bluſh to appear in ſo Venerable a Preſence, as a *Corona* of the moſt Moderate, and Prudent, Grave and Experienc'd, Learned and Pious Prelates muſt needs be; who travel'd from their own Countries, that they might muſter up all the Supplies which the united Councils and Prayers of ſuch an Illuſtrious Body could contribute to the Peace of the Church, by rightly marſhalling the External Diſcipline of it, Confirming the Orthodox Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, and ſetling the Oeconomy of thoſe indifferent things, which our Saviour left to humane determination; and which the perſecuted and haraſſed condition of the Apoſtles did not permit them to eſtabliſh by Legal Sanctions.

And therefore ſince the Providence of God caus'd the neceſſity of ſuch Councils; and ſince the diſſention of Chriſtians

Chriſtians even in indifferent things is ſo pernicious; 'tis a Chriſtian's duty to ſubmit in ſuch caſes to their Decrees, which under the Divine Conduct are the ſafeſt Rules to walk by, if they do not ſtep out of the bounds of their proper Province, and pretend to alter the Immutable Laws which Chriſt and the Apoſtles (who were immediately inſpired by the Holy Spirit, who is his Vice-Roy here after his Aſcenſion) have Enacted. But why are we ſo tedious? Next to the Divine Bleſſing, we owe the ſucceſsful growth of many Chriſtian Plantations to the care of thoſe Counſels.

But if ſuch Learned and Great Men have not reſted on their own Counſels in their Affairs, how ſhould the illiterate ſecurely diſpatch the buſineſs of edifying the Body of Chriſt, and ſaving their own precious Souls without conferring with one another? for every man hath a ſoul to ſave, and ſince Sociableneſs is of ſuch great uſe to the higheſt orders and ranks of men in the Church, ſurely it is a help which cannot

cannot be omitted by the Laity, when they have opportunity, unleſs they have a better opinion of themſelves, than thoſe who are far wiſer; for they ſhould remember, that their Miniſters are not omnipreſent, and cannot always be at their Elbow; but if they would diſcourſe together of what their Paſtors teach them, they would nail their wholſome truths to their memories thereby, and carry themſelves like Brethren to one another; Brethren who are fellow partakers of the ſame Communion, members of the ſame Body, and the one Catholick Church.

2. We may learn from our Bleſſed Saviour's Inſtitution of a Catholick Church, the danger of ſeparating from a National Church, which agrees with the Catholick Church.

Now any Church which injoyns the belief of no Doctrine, but what our Saviour and his Apoſtles promulg'd, may be very deſervedly reckon'd to be a Branch of the Catholick Church, which our Saviour ordained.

And

And therefore since the Church of *England* is such, to separate from her, is in some respect to break Communion with the Catholick Church. Wherefore since our Saviour hath laid such strict obligations upon all his followers to hold together by an universal Sociableness, we cannot but pity their condition who tear in pieces his seamless Coat, some by constantly itching after Innovations, and proposing new Platforms of Church-Government; others by adulterating the pure Doctrines of Christ and his Apostles with new-fangled inventions of their own brains; surely we cannot ascribe such humours and practices to the Catholick Spirit: Surely he cannot heat mens brains with such Heterodox Phancies, and Blasphemous Whimsies, which push them on so violently to be Advocates of Faction, Sedition and Heresie, which embroil the Church and State with endless feuds, groundless jealousies, and Hellish animosities. No, for certain, 'tis their wisdom no longer to foster the off-springs of their own passions, pride, and

and inconſtancy upon the Bleſſed Spirit of Peace and Meekneſs; henceforward let them exert his influence upon their minds by bringing forth fruits worthy repentance, worthy that regenerating ſpirit, worthy of the wiſdom which cometh from above, by their peaceableneſs, gentleneſs, *&c.* and prove as eminent Inſtruments of thoſe Vertues, as they (may God open their eyes and have mercy on them) have been factors of contention, diſſociableneſs, tumult, and a ſelfiſh ſpirit in the world; by perverting their neighbours with infectious Principles, who otherwiſe would have walked in the paths of peace. And that they may not want motives to obey this honeſt advice, we earneſtly beg of them to conſider, that when the Kingdoms of the whole World ſhall become the Kingdoms of our Lord Jeſus; when *Jews* and *Gentiles* ſhall all unanimouſly and gladly embrace the Chriſtian Faith; when the eyes of the ignorant ſhall be open'd, and the moſt obſtinate wills ſubdued to the obedience of the Go-

ſpel,

ſpel, that then the Glory of the Catholick Church ſhall be encreas'd by the enlargement of its Dominion: *Then the Lion ſhall lie down with the Lamb*; then Unity and Sociableneſs ſhall ſway a Victorious Scepter, and that by how much the larger the Catholick Church grows, by ſo much the more glorious ſhe will be. And further, let them conſider, that a Catholick Charity will fit us for the bleſs'd ſtate of the Triumphant Church, where the inſeparable amity, and univerſal conſent of the Saints render their felicity compleat.

The Sum of all is this, Separation doth not become a Member of a Catholick Church, ſince one great reaſon why it was inſtituted, was, that Chriſtians might live in peace and unity, be Sociable and Communicative.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

IN the laſt Chapter it hath been prov'd, that Man is a Sociable creature by nature, and that he is more peculiarly fitted by nature for Sociableneſs in Religious matters; and likewiſe that our Saviour and his Apoſtles alſo have recommended this practice, both from the publick celebration of Divine Worſhip, and the Doctrine of the Holy Catholick Church.

And now ſurely all men muſt acknowledge, that 'tis the intereſt and wiſdom of men to employ their Sociableneſs with great diligence in Religion, ſince 'tis that which ſuits moſtly with the dignity of humane nature; that which can raiſe his ſoul to ſuch a noble greatneſs, as to fit it not only for the Society of Angels, but to have commerce with God himſelf, and to be inveſted with a Divine Nature, a nature like his, who is a perpetual ſource of infinite ſatisfaction to himſelf and

and thoſe who partake of his nature, this never born and never dying nature is the foundation and Pillar of all the happineſs which thoſe capacious ſpirits in Heaven can enjoy or gaſp after.

And ſince man is not only Heir of the Material and Viſible Creation, but alſo of Spiritual Enjoyments; for he is made but a little lower than the Angels; and ſince that God who hath ſtamped on him an impreſs of his own Image and likeneſs muſt cancel his Hand and Seal, if he diſcourage the humble endeavours of thoſe who ſtand Candidates of Divine bliſs; for why did he breath into man an Immortal Soul, if he deſign'd him for nothing but the felicity of a mortal ſtate? Why did the Son of God aſſume the nature of Man, when thoſe rebellious Angels never were comforted with the Blood of a JESUS, if 'tis a matter of diſpute, whether men can be eternally and ſpiritually happy? What mean our ſoaring and ſwift thoughts, which travel beyond the Clouds, thoſe flights

of

of mind and affection, whereby we view God himſelf, and our Souls are diſſolv'd in unſeen raptures and ecſtaſies? All theſe tell us that we are capable of commencing high degrees of Cœleſtial bliſs, and arriving to a real *Elyſium*, where with Angels we ſhall ſhare in that plenitude of all that is great and good, lovely and filling, which can never be exhauſted. But ſince we are entertained with ſuch a Glorious proſpect, let us no longer wallow in the Lake of Senſe, and heaps of filth; let this world be a nothing in our judgments; and let us by our ſociable, and all our other faculties, watch carefully, that the crafty miſts and trifles of this life, and violent tide of mean and worldly cares may not choke our Seraphick inclinations; with all our might let us purſue a Rational perfection, which is the whole of Man; let us lay out as much of our time, thoughts, words and actions as we can, upon the advancement of our internal peace and ſatisfaction. Nay, let us even in the croud of our Secular buſi-

neſs, manifeſt by the pious Interejaculations of our minds, holy eloquence, and the like, that we aſpire after a God-like happineſs, long for, and dote upon the World and Kingdom of Reaſon.

SECT. II.

FROM what hath been ſaid we may clearly learn, that 'tis our intereſt, and therefore our wiſdom to take moſt care of our Rational part; but ſince the Providence of God has appointed man to eat his Bread with the ſweat of his brows, becauſe (till he hath been purg'd from the droſs of his natural corruption) unleſs he is curb'd with ſuch reſtraints, he would lie expoſed as a prey to all temptations; and ſince whilſt our Souls are encloyſtred within theſe priſons of earth, they can but juſt peep, as Debtors out of a Grate, into yonder ſtate of liberty; and therefore to be continually gazing on ſpiritual things now would be uneaſie to them; God found out

out thoſe Employments which are uſeful in ſome reſpects to man, and keep his Faculties from being idle in this ſtate of Probation.

SINCE the Caſe ſtands ſo, we ſay, between God and men's Souls, 'tis impoſſible that all our time ſhould be ſpent in the Exerciſes which have an immediate Tendency to Divine things, and conſequently, our ſociable Faculties cannot always be engaged in ſublime and heavenly Offices; therefore in laying down ſome Directions how we may improve our natural Sociableneſs to the nobleſt ends in Converſation, we muſt neceſſarily diſtinguiſh Converſation into Ordinary, and Extraordinary.

FIRST therefore, we ſhall treat of ordinary; by ordinary Converſation, we mean our Converſation in ordinary and common days; days, in which neither the Laws of God, the Church, or Chriſtian Princes have forbad ſecular Trades and Studies to be carried on.

NOW though ſuch are far more numerous than the Lord's Days, and ſacred Feſtivals which are dedicated wholly

to his Service; and God hath been so liberal as to require but one day in seven, ordinarily to be separated to his Honour: Yet, since the Salvation of our Souls is a Work of so great moment and difficulty, he did not design that we should be so involv'd in our sublunary Business, as quite to hinder our progress in Vertue and Religion.

FOR there is no person, who follows a lawful Calling, but may so order the common Actions of Life, and his ordinary Conversation, as that they may be in some measure subservient to the Glory of God, and his own improvement in Holiness.

But since persons Fortunes, Concerns, and Stations in the World are various, and one man hath those Opportunities which others have not; upon this Account, they may improve Conversation several ways, according to their different Circumstances, therefore we'll make a Distinction in treating of some methods whereby men may improve ordinary Conversation.

FOR

FOR to inſtance in particular States of Life; men of noble Extraction, Deſcent, and a plentiful Eſtate, would reap a great deal of morality from beſtowing ſome of the time, which they allow themſelves for Converſation, in Courts of Judicature, if they would make ſome Reflections upon Occurrences there.

WHEN they ſee a Caſe fairly decided, and all ſubtil Sophiſtries and knaviſh Tricks of the Law diſcountenanced, deſpiſed and hooted at, the Judge and Counſellors applauded for dividing Juſtice equally and carefully, and preſerving the Laws of the Land, they will be enamoured with an Affection for Juſtice; they will count it an Honour to obſerve what is right, and deduce ſuch thoughts as theſe; that the Judgment of God is far more accurate; and that his Mercy will not bribe his Juſtice to pardon at the laſt impenitent Sinners, though he connives at them for a while; and that the Laws of Heaven being far more exact and ſacred than the

Laws of Men, deserve a far stricter Obedience.

AGAIN, when he sees a Family which is too much given to Contention and Law-Suits, cast, he learns from their Overthrow the Danger of Litigiousness, which makes him to bear some small Losses for the sake of beloved Peace; and not rack his mind with the doubtful and tedious Harangues of the Barr, as those miserable Wranglers do: When he sees the Friendless hal'd into Court by brib'd Officers, and overthrown through the Perjuries of suborned Witnesses, where Harpies hid under the Cloak of Justice strip him of all his worldly Goods and Comforts: Such a sight as this melts him into Compassion, moves him to vindicate the Innocent, and rescue the Helpless from the Jaws of the Lyon.

FURTHER, the observing how tickliſh Cases many times are, will move him, when any of his Neighbours quarrel and threaten to sue one another for petty or no Occasions, to be

be an Embaſſador of Peace in God's ſtead to them, by adjuſting their rights, and compoſing the difference which thoſe who frequent places wherein Caſes are try'd may have skill and authority enough to do; by this means he will obtain the bleſſing of *Peacemakers, who ſhall ſee God:* Nay, beſides, this will incite him to forgive his debtors, who are induſtrious, but not able to repay him.

MOREOVER, Gentlemen, may very handſomely diſpenſe ſometime, in viſiting the fatherleſs and widows in their affliction. This will be an effectual method to *keep them unſpotted from the world*; this will teach them *not to truſt in uncertain riches*; not to make canker'd Gold, and moth-eaten Garments their darlings, and the Idols of their hearts; for certainly they muſt be more forcibly wean'd from the love of the world, and covetous deſires, by ſeeing the private tears of the *Deſolate* and her *Orphans*, than by hearing the moſt Tragical relations of their miſeries; this cannot but convince them

that a prosperous state is very slippery, and not to be rested in; a frequent view of others calamities, will mind them that calamities may be their own lot; and therefore they will *make friends to themselves of the Mammon of unrighteousness*, by their Liberality, and wisely repose for themselves treasures in the prayers of the needy; for nothing is so Rhetorical an argument for Beneficence, as frequent and fresh Ideas of the forlorn condition of others; but besides, the making Personal visits to the Indigent, will grace their bounty with a lovly condescension, and fill them with the satisfaction of having disposed their charity prudently on fit objects. Indeed, 'twould be an endless task to mention all the blessed fruits of such practices as these; the smiling reflections of their Consciences will be a reward. Oh! how will Gentlemen who take these courses, when they are in company together, congratulate one another, and praise their God for enriching them with a large estate, and appointing them heirs of a larger heart?

heart? Oh! how joyfully will theſe faithful Stewards of Heaven's bounty; Almoners of the King of Kings, think that they have conferr'd the abundance of their wealth upon the Poor, when others have ſquander'd and conſum'd rich Patrimonies upon their Extravagancies and luſts? How will they with delight acknowledge, *that 'tis more pleaſant to give than to receive*? How will it rejoyce them to ſee the Harmony and Peace continue, of which they were the chief Inſtruments? But 'tis high time to crave their pardon for detaining them ſo long, ſince 'twould be an unpardonable affront for us to think them ſo ſottiſh, as to want entreaty to do that which ſuits their Character here, and will capacitate them to ſtand Rivals of bliſs and glory with Angels hereafter.

And now it may not be inconvenient in the next place, to adviſe perſons of Birth and Figure, for the moſt part to admit thoſe who are ſincere and plain, into their Converſation.

NO-

NOTHING hath prov'd of more fatal consequences, than the pernicious communications of those whispering Courtiers, who apply themselves to the study of Flattery and Dissimulation; who by their formal back-bitings, and malicious insinuations, are always plotting, how they may worm out others who mean well, and skrew themselves into favour. Those who love to breed Mutinies, unhinge the Government, blot out our Laws, and extirpate that little peace and unity which is among us; those in a word, who continually are syringing factious Principles into their Companions ears, till by degrees they get rooted in their minds: Therefore since nothing can be a greater Ornament to the Scutcheon of a Gentleman, than an untainted Loyalty, a publick Spirit, and tender regard for the peace of the Kingdom, we exhort all persons of Quality, to look upon the open and undesigning the most eligible Companions; such, whose heads do not swell with venomous Counsels, nor with new Scenes

of

of change; whoſe tongues do not drop ſecret Libels, and rebellious murmurings; and on the other hand, let them ſhun thoſe turbulent Crafts-men, who under the pretence of Courteſie and Civility, cokes the unwary into treacherous Aſſociations, and undermine our liberty, by winning by ſuch ways Proſelytes of Sedition; which deſigns if you would marr, ye muſt beware of wolves which walk about in ſheeps-clothing. It came into our minds the rather to give this caution, becauſe ſo many Gentlemen have Offices in the Court, and are Members of Parliament; and therefore their fidelity to the King (to ſpeak humanely) is a matter of no ſmall dependence; State-affairs being more properly their Province, than belonging to the ſhallow heads of vulgar and pragmatical people; *who mind things too high for them*; which hurtful humour that it may be quell'd, as well as others, we modeſtly beg leave to addreſs our ſelves without offence, to that branch of Gentry in our Kingdom who are Magiſtrates.

OUR

OUR request to those is, that in their Court-Assemblies, and other opportune seasons, they would consult together, and spur on one another to a more vigorous execution of those Laws, which are Enacted against the reigning Vices of the Age. By conferring together, they will be enliven'd with a more Heroick courage against the impudence and horrid enormities of too many, who send up a Challenge to the Divine Justice, by their Blasphemous Oaths and Curses; who mock and flout his terrible Thunder with whole Vollies of Atheistical expressions, denying his Being, and ridiculing his Providence. Others indeed there are, who don't sit Presidents of Atheism *in Cathedra*, but nevertheless, call God to be Umpire in the Disputes and Quarrels which spring from their Passions and Debaucheries; who *Subpœna* the Divine Presence, to attest their foolish vanities, if not their falshoods. Many others there are, who by their smooth sorceries, and eloquent Chymistry have turn'd the Truth of God

God into a lye, broach'd Doctrines which imply him to be an accepter of perſons, to encourage wickedneſs, and rob the Bleſſed Jeſus of his Divinity. Others there are, who too plainly diſcover their inward aſſent to ſuch Impoſtures, by ſhrowding the moſt infamous vices under the meer profeſſion of Chriſtianity, ſuch as Lying, Drunkenneſs, Whoring, Sabbath-breaking, and the like. All theſe openly defie the zeal of the illuſtrious Princes which fill the *Engliſh* Throne (who have proclaim'd penalties againſt them) as if they *held the ſword in vain.*

WHEREFORE, Gentlemen, we earneſtly intreat you by the honour of God, the Majeſty and Merits of our Princes, the authority of our Laws, and the reputation of your own integrity, when you converſe together, whilſt our Gracious and Sacred King is diſplaying his Victorious Arms abroad, that you would by provoking one another to an active zeal, be invigorated more watchfully to inſpect, and manfully to ſubdue thoſe Domeſtick Enemies,

mies, which like Vipers gnaw the Bowels of our Nation: That the many Excellent Sermons and Admonitions of our diligent Ministers from the Pulpit may prove no longer ineffectual; and the Intercessions of the Righteous, by reason of such clamorous wickedness, and your neglecting to do what lies in your power, save none but their own Souls.

TO dismiss this Instance, Gentlemen may assure themselves, since they have such fair opportunities of doing so much good, that they are not design'd for an idle and oscitant life.

BUT there are others, who may advantage one another very much in ordinary conversation to whom we shall apply our selves freely, being those of our own rank, namely Scholars, and young Students in the University; for we can by no means forbear to put them in mind, of what a special blessing the kind Providence of God hath oblig'd them with, by turning them loose into the green and flourishing Pastures

Paſtures of Knowledge, that Paradiſe which abounds with all ſorts of Learning; which is either requiſite for uſe or ornament; now that they may never hear a dire ſentence paſs'd upon them for abuſing ſuch an extraordinary favour; we exhort them, as they prize the hopeful proſpect of their careful Parents, or liberal Patrons, the goodly promiſes of their budding years, their credit here, and the comfortable account of their time and talents hereafter, that they would never give way to idleneſs, which gives an edge to all the weapons of the Devil, and our own luſts. And therefore when they allow themſelves relaxation from their Cloſet-ſtudies, 'twill be their prudenteſt method to frequent the company of the diligent; for by obſerving the fruitfulneſs of their converſation, and often hearing the wiſe diſcourſes which fall from their lips on all occaſions, like ſhowers of Manna from Heaven in times of ſcarcity, they will admire the diligence which God bleſſes, and will ſtrive to copy out the worthy examples of thoſe who

who *seek wisdom with all their might, and with their getting get understanding*, who wait for her early in the morning, and wakefully attend her visits in the evening; thus they will be furnish'd with the prudence which is necessary for those who would lead a sober life, far excelling the worldly wisdom, which only is got by such who cloy themselves with the vanities of the Stage, and bad conversation; this will keep them from a loitering life, being lavish of years, and from being betrayed into the snares of those privy counsellors of lewdness, and Sophisters of Hell, who sacrifice their wit, strength, and time to Drunkenness and unseemly Customs. Alas! who would have thought that in spight of the inspection of the Reverend Heads of the University, that Vice would ever have assum'd the face of authority there, and be honour'd with the Patronage of Scholars. But we are not now undertaking to speak any thing to those who are already corrupted by associating themselves to a Clan of young Debauchees

chees (commonly ſtiled the *Red-Lyon* College) who deſign only at their Meetings to defend and patronize all manner of Vice, which is a practice ſo notorious and abominable, that it will never gain the honour of a ſmile from the numerous train of her more hopeful Sons, who now begin to joyn their forces, that they may pluck down the ſtrong holds of vicious Combinations, and trample their deſigns under their feet; which worthy attempt encourag'd by the Prayers of good Chriſtians, is very likely to ſucceed; ſo that ſhe may now more deſervedly be call'd the Gates of Heaven, than as ſhe hath by too many, for the ſake of lewd Students, been branded with the ignominious name of the Ports of Hell; which ſcandal hath been chiefly owing to ſome Parents, and Guardians, who ſend their Children thither, without a competent ſtock of Education or Prudence, which makes them contemptible in the eyes of thoſe who exceed them in Learning and Judgment, and forces them through deſpair to herd

with lewd men of the Town; and thus they attain never higher than the credit of wearing a deſpiſed and upbraiding Gown; and becauſe the courteſie and clemency of their Tutors and Governours, ſtill cheriſh hopes of their Reformation, and are not willing totally to fruſtrate the care of their Parents (who perhaps have ſtrain'd above their capacity to maintain them there) pleads with them not utterly to reject them. The honour of the Univerſity is blacken'd with the calumny of ſelling Degrees. The reaſon why we have toucht upon this Subject was to vindicate the Univerſity of *Cambridge*, and to counſel thoſe who delight in railing, to make a diſtinction between the few who are diſorderly there, and thoſe who carry themſelves modeſtly, and ſtudiouſly, who if they hold on to their lives end, will have reaſon never to name the place without reverence; and further, that we might forewarn thoſe who are preparing for the Univerſity, not to be over-haſty, but to arm themſelves before hand with good

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Literature, and Counſel, that they may know how to reſiſt the firſt allurements of idle company, and that we may procure a kinder entertainment with them for the advice of ſtriking acquaintance with the diligent, becauſe they are the moſt excellent and uſeful to the world, and the moſt modeſt and humble. Profane perſons if they are a little witty, an Air of pride and vanity, and inſolency runs through all their thoughts and actions, but the ſober and induſtrious, whatever their abilities are, never over-value themſelves for them; for ſtudious perſons cannot but lead a contemplative life, and thoſe who uſe to think, cannot eſcape ſuch notions as theſe; that they are men, what they have firſt came from God, that pride maketh men unruly, and that without a principle of humility, Knowledge is but *a tinkling Cymbal*, and that if it be not ſanctified, it hinders a Religious ſenſe of God, which highly promotes our Spiritual intereſt; but now the frequent reception of ſuch thoughts, will not permit

Scholars to throw away the fruits of their diligence upon ſuch ſneaking ends as pride, vain-glory, &c. they prompt the diligent to do a great deal of good without noiſe. And even without their own knowledge, and a vaunting remembrance of it, they convey unknown kindneſſes to many, who judge them to be fools and drones, and if ever high opinions of themſelves begin to ſteal upon them unawares, their generous intentions quickly get the upper-hand over them. So that if humility is a comely vertue, as the worſt of men cannot but confeſs, the Company of the diligent is in this reſpect uſeful, becauſe it inſtills principles of modeſty and lowlineſs into thoſe, who are aſſociates with them.

BUT there is another motive ſtill behind which ſhall be our laſt, whereby we ſhall demonſtrate the benefit of diligent Companions, and that is the Gratitude of the diligent, for the diligence of a Scholar is an act of Gratitude; it chears the heart of his Parents, and anſwers the Liberality of his Benefactors.

factors. But this is not all; for he loves to acknowledge and give thanks for the Providence and Benignity by which he subsists; the diligent are not like those who abuse and conceal the Indulgence of their friends, to whom they are indebted for their opportunity of improving themselves. This is no censure: for 'tis not a Miracle to see that they who neglect their proper duties of life, and make no remarks upon Divine Providence, should be ungrateful to men; which Vice though it is very much in fashion now, yet the *Persians* according to their Laws (if we may believe *Xenophon* who some where takes notice of it) punisht Ingratitude severely, * for they "looked upon ungrate-"ful people to have no "regard for God, their "Parents, Country or "Friends; for why? "Ingratitude is the "next stept to Impu-

* Δικάζονται δὲ οὐκ ἥκιστα, ἀχαριστίας· καὶ ὃν ἂν γνῶσι δυνάμενόν μεν χάριν ἀποδιδόναι, μὴ ἀποδιδόντα δὲ κολάζουσι, καὶ τουτὸν ἰσχυρῶς· οἴονται γὰρ τοὺς ἀχαρίστους, καὶ περὶ θέους ἂν μάλιστα ἀμελῶς ἔχειν, καὶ περὶ γονέας, καὶ πατρίδα, καὶ φίλους, ἕπεσθαι δὲ δοκεῖ μάλιστα τῇ ἀχαριστίᾳ ἡ ἀνεσχυντία.

'dence, which all men abhor in any but 'themſelves. Therefore 'tis the beſt way for Scholars (who would not fall ſhort of the Publicans, who as our Saviour tells us, *Do good to thoſe who do good to them*) to be grateful, and for that end, to converſe with the diligent.

BUT we will paſs on to men of Commerce and Trade.

THE beſt Directions we deſire them to accept from us are theſe: To keep Company with juſt and honeſt dealers, that by fixing their eyes frequently upon their uprightneſs and integrity, they may be won to love it themſelves, and ſcorn the baſe practices of perjury, lying, equivocating, and all thoſe unwarrantable and forbidden baits, with which men fiſh for a little ſordid gain, that they may be cautious in making Promiſes, and punctual in making them good if they can; plain and free from tricks, intricacies, diſhoneſt windings about, and reſerves in their contracts; in all theſe reſpects, they will greatly accommodate themſelves, by re-

reſorting to the company of the equitable: Moreover this cuſtom will convince them, that though the multitude is unjuſt, though Knavery and immoderate gain is popular, there are ſome who *fear God, and regard man*, ſubmit to Conſcience, *fulfill the Law*, and obey the *Prophets*: In a word, who walk by the Royal and Chriſtian Rule, *of doing to others, as they would that men ſhould do unto them*: Nay further, by holding correſpondence with the honeſt and equitable, they will be inſtructed and wrought upon to diſcharge their truſts as it becomes them to their ſervants, and not ſo imperiouſly to Monopolize their ſervice to themſelves, as to deprive them of convenient ſeaſons, of ſerving according to their duty, their better Maſter in Heaven: For Tradeſmen, and other labouring buſie perſons, who are equitable and calm, are not ſo intangled with an uneaſie anxiety for the periſhing goods of this life, as to be always over-burdening the weak ſhoulders of their Apprentices, as ſome unhumane Maſters do, who uſe their ſer-

vants as *Mahometans* do their Slaves; whoſe Shops are Galleys; but alas! how unreaſonable are ſuch uſages? for ſince the Beaſts of the field are allow'd times of reſt and ceſſation, how can any one think it fitting, that thoſe who partake of their own nature, though their ſervants, yet *free in Chriſt*, ſhould be cruſht with an inceſſant yoke? but all men having ſuch clear notions of juſtice and injuſtice; how lovely the one is, and how odious the other, and eaſily making a diſtinction between them both in the caſe before us, and moſt others. 'Tis a needleſs task to write Encomiums upon Juſtice, for ſhe is her own Encomium; all commend Probity, but alas! few practiſe it.

Probitas laudatur & alget.

'Tis the Practice which is moſt wanting, and which would ſtill recommend it more. Aſſociate therefore with thoſe who practiſe it, and ſo you will grow Proficients in the practice of it your ſelves.

SINCE

SINCE we have proceeded ſo far, we muſt not forget in the next place, to find out ſome proper Company for the Poor, and thoſe who are in a ſervile Condition. Your Refuge and beſt Improvement will be had in the ſmall number of the Grateful and Contented, the Meek and Humble; hereby your Eyes may ſo affect your heart, as to engraft in your Souls thoſe Vertues, which all thoſe who are in your Circumſtances ought be qualified with more eſpecially, by obſerving their poverty of Spirit, their orderly and becoming Carriage, their Indifferency for tranſitory Proſperity, their chearful and humble Acknowledgments of the Divine diſpenſations, and the Beneficence of their earthly Maſters or other Friends; you cannot but diſcern ſomething of your own Defects herein, and muſt be enforc'd by ſuch Examples (if the principle of Reaſon reigns in you) with a zealous Emulation (inaſmuch as you are in as good a Capacity as your Neighbours) to ſet upon the Practice

Practice of what is praise-worthy in them.

THERE is no need, we think, of instancing in more, since there are scarce any Persons (whom we dare presume to direct) that may not be reduced to one of these Heads.

THEREFORE from the whole we may draw this Inference, That 'tis convenient for all men, for the most part, to be sociable with those of their own Rank, Profession and Circumstances, (provided, as has been before discoursed of, that they are the most exemplary for Vertue and Honesty) for though there are no Vertues, which all persons, let their condition be what it will may not have Occasion to exercise some times, yet, there are some particular Vices, which men are by their Circumstances more ordinarily in Danger of being insnared in, and also Vertues which our various states of Life do more especially oblige us to be well grounded and advanced in; wherefore Christians, who are of the same Vocation, and some way equal, being more sensible

ſible of one anothers peculiar Dangers, Obligations and proper Duties which are incumbent upon them in that ſtate of Life which God hath called them to, cannot but moſt advantage one another in Converſation; they cannot ſo eaſily lead one another into Errour, or impoſe upon one another, or ſpeak what they diſcourſe of coldly and indifferently, or interfere with other peoples Affairs; becauſe they are, 'tis ſuppoſed, expert and moſt ready at the moſt Chriſtian Diſcourſes concerning the Duties appertaining to (and which, when put in action, are the greateſt Ornament of) their Affairs.

BUT though hereby we condemn thoſe, who care not how idly they live and neglectful of their Concerns if they do but converſe with their Betters; yet we do not tye perſons ſo faſt to the Company of their Equals, as that they ſhould refuſe, when occaſion offers it ſelf, caſually to converſe with thoſe who differ in worldly relations from them; ſince there are Subjects which are equally ſuitable for all men

men of any condition of life to discourse of, rather than their time should be lost: Such as our own defects, the good examples of others, the beautiful structure of this visible frame of things, a future Judgment, the necessity of a good inclination in all our undertakings, the vast capacities of our Immortal Souls, the impartial stroke of death, and the like.

NOW there are several advantages which will attend this method of conversation.

FOR first, by chosing good Companions suitable to their temper and Disposition, Age and Circumstances, and pitching upon some Moral Vertues on ordinary days, as fit Topicks of discourse, men may with great satisfaction methodically recollect the chief tenour of their words every night; whereas those who are neither choice of their Companions, nor Words, cannot talk so freely or well, and are at a loss, if they go to examine what good they have got by Conversation.

2. THIS

2. THIS method of Converſation lays the ſureſt foundations of a laſting Friendſhip: Equals take moſt delight in one anothers Company; they have no temptation to flatter, or be afraid of one another, and if they are eminently vertuous in their proper Callings, their bands of honeſty and friendſhip will prove indiſſoluble, which nothing but death can looſe. But what a great bleſſing the fidelity of Friends is, the comforts attending it ſufficiently explain; on the contrary, they that are partners in wickedneſs and vanity, adhere to their Friendſhip, whilſt it improves their worldly Intereſt; but let the Scene change, and their kindneſs falls to the ground: For indeed how ſhould men who are reſtrained by no Principles do otherwiſe?

3. THIS method is very advantageous, becauſe it prevents two great errors in ordinary Converſation.

FOR, 1. when men are engag'd in ſuch diſcourſe as this, there is no room left for vain and idle chat; their tongues

tongues do not run at random about Bulls and Butter-flies; our Neighbours credit is secur'd; clamor, immoderate laughter, obscenity and profaneness find no admission.

2. SPEAKING of Duties relating to our Vocation in the World, keepeth us from running into another error, namely discoursing of the most sublime truths of Christianity, when we are not in a fit temper; for some people think that these are unseasonable at no times because they are good and heavenly; forgetting that for the same reason, they should never be mentioned, unless at such times when we can entertain them with such degrees of affection, and reverence, as are suitable to the greatness of their nature; for to speak rashly and awkardly of Jesus Christ, though with a good intention, is perhaps more offensive to God and dangerous for us (it bringing a habit of making his Sacred and Reverend Name too common) than many are aware of; and therefore it ought very seldom to be introduc'd into ordi-

nary

nary Converſation, when we are apt to be too earneſtly intent upon our Secular buſineſs; therefore Moral Duties are the propereſt ſubjects for us to conferr about in ordinary converſation; theſe we can better uſher into company, if ſome ſhould happen to be bad without running the risk of being laught at for Enthuſiaſts; and beſides, Moral Vertues are the Cardinal ones in the conduct of our humane and common life, and thoſe which are moſt practicable in ordinary Converſation, and prepare the way (with God's grace, for which we muſt pray frequently and earneſtly) for the more Heavenly and Chriſtian Vertues; for they make our Prayers for them the more acceptable.

'TIS undoubtedly true, that we muſt be good Citizens and civil, before we can be good Chriſtians; the precepts of *Moſes*, and *Solomon*, are Prologues which muſt be rehearſed in our lives, before we can act our Part perfectly in the Glorious Scene of our Bleſſed Saviour's Life, Death, Reſurrection, Aſcenſion,

Ascension, with the descent of the Holy Ghost, and the blessed influences, which, if rightly perused, they have upon our minds and practice.

SECT. III.

SHEWING what Qualifications are necessary for those who would rightly manage *Ordinary Conversation.*

WHAT hath been deliver'd concerning the management of ordinary Conversation, we trust if candidly weigh'd will be acknowledg'd to be very useful.

BUT since before we can be dexterous, and accomplish'd Masters of this or any other good Arts, we must be throughly instructed in, and qualified with the means of attaining to a right management of it, 'tis requisite to adjoin some Rules, whereby we may fit our selves for ordinary Conversation.

NOW those who would be prequalify'd for a successful management of ordinary

ordinary Converſation, muſt not be buſie bodies; they muſt not too narrowly pry into the affairs of their Neighbours, for this will keep them from minding diligently the proper offices of that ſtate of life which they are ſeated in. They that take pleaſure in prompting others, will be apt to make foul blunders in their own actions; for 'tis a common and true obſervation, That they who are ſo critical in things which they have no right to finger, are meer bunglers at their own buſineſs. But we dare not detain the Reader too long with this caution, leſt he ſhould ſuſpect us to tax him with Pragmaticalneſs.

2. WE ſhould not lean too much upon our own thoughts, but we ſhould alſo add to our Hive the many choice flowers which we may pick out of the Proverbs of *Solomon*, and other Writings, the five Books of *Moſes*, and the Son of *Syrach*; which if they are treaſur'd in the heart and memory, will enrich us with a plentiful proviſion of Moral knowledge. Here rich men are

dehorted from Covetousness, Oppression, Litigiousness, Pride; and Magistrates from Bribery, Partiality, and Dastardliness; Poor men from fraud, violence, discontentedness and ingratitude; Scholars from self-conceitedness, idleness, and the like.

THOSE of them who have been educated in Learning may also take the pains to read *Hierocles*, *Tully*'s *Offices*, *Sextius*, some of *Isocrates*, the Lives of *Diogenes Laertius*, some Satyrs of *Juvenal* and *Persius*, and other useful Writers of the Heathens which they cannot want Information of. For, to pass by at present many advantages the ruminating on the Labours of the best Guides of Nature brings forth, this one is a great inducement, That it helps us with a more transporting ecstasie to admire the bright Revelation of the Gospel, when we see how the most Glorious Luminaries of Nature are Eclipsed, and hide their heads at the appearance of the Sun of Righteousness.

3. THEY

3. THEY muſt be well Diſciplin'd in the Government of the Tongue, who would rightly manage Ordinary Converſation. 'Tis a neat and excellent obſervation of the Apoſtle St. *James, That we put Bits into the horſes mouths, that they may obey us, and ſo we turn about their whole bodies as we pleaſe; as alſo, that the Ships though they are big and driven by fierce winds, are turn'd about as the governour wills with a ſmall helm, Jam.* 3. 4, 5. So our Tongue is the Pilot of the whole man in Converſation; which unleſs the eyes of our Underſtandings are wakeful, will miſcarry; which ſpoils all the good of Converſation, but a *wholeſome* and well ſeaſon'd *tongue is a tree of life.* Our deſign in this place is not to enumerate all the ſlips of the Tongue, or to forewarn you againſt the groſſer abuſes of it, ſuch as Lying, Cenſoriouſneſs, Treaſ'nous Speeches, obſcene and profane Conferences, trifling Diſputes, and the like; theſe are ſuch palpable follies, that though many are guilty of them, yet it cannot be for want of

being forewarn'd againſt them; becauſe our natural Conſcience is angry enough with ſuch practices, if admonitions had power enough to break us of them.

BUT however, we cannot omit to point out ſome faults, which very often are glibly ſwallow'd down by ſober perſons in Converſation; which nevertheleſs are very pernicious; as for inſtance [*Flattery*,] a Vice which tickles our ears, and makes our fancies wanton, miniſters to pride the conſtant fore-runner of all evils, rather than the improvement of thoſe that hear it; it hinders the performance of the beſt Offices of Friends, namely wiſe and ſeaſonable reproofs: We are ſo afraid of forfeiting the favour of our Friend, that we many times rather chuſe to ſee him periſh in his follies than awaken him out of a dangerous ſtate by exciting his Conſcience; and if we preſent him with ſome delicate diſhes of Diſcourſe, we never ſeaſon them with that Salt, which gives a quick and laſting reliſh to our admonitions,

nitions, and keep them from putrefying in the digeſtion; for a perſon in private may eaſily let fall from his mind ſome general Counſels and Cautions, but will not forget a reproof, which is applied home to his own caſe; this was that Salt which the *Roman* Orator judg'd that friends muſt eat Buſhels of together, before their League of Friendſhip can be as ſtrong as *Adamant*; and it was both a true and worthy obſervation of the ſame Author, That 'tis the moſt valuable jewel that we can purchaſe by Friendſhip, and yet that which the generality of people through pride and ignorance tramples upon, which is the reaſon why ſo few Contracts of Friendſhip prove to be of an ancient date, and their love ſo ſoon wears away, and is blaſted with the leaſt puff of adverſity; becauſe ſo many do not ſo much regard their Friends main and conſtant intereſt, as their private and fickle humours.

SOME may here excuſe the neglect of reproving Friends, becauſe 'tis ſo

ſeldom welcome to thoſe who are reprov'd; but this is not of force enough to fright wiſe friends from it; and 'tis well if we are not deceived in our judgment, when we thus complain; for many times we think becauſe our Friend is uneaſie at the preſent, that he doth not deſerve reproof; which is a miſtake, for they that can hear reproof without any regret or fretfulneſs, ſeem to us not to be duly affected with it, for a remembrance of a fault chafes the mind of the humble and modeſt; the pain of their diſeaſe teezes and pincheth them, but doth not provoke them to ſpurn at their Phyſician. Impatience therefore is very often a good infirmity, and procures the Reprover more hearty thanks for his good turn when he's calm'd; 'tis a better ſign than to thank a perſon preſently for a reproof, without bluſhing at the deform'd picture which is repreſented to him by his friend, who is a Looking-glaſs to ſhew him his defects.

FOR that is but a formal patience, which interprets your reproof a courteſie

teſie (as we all ought to do) but ſo haſtily, and before he hath conſider'd whether it be juſt or no; that by his not reſenting it grievouſly for a while, he never comes any further than a complaiſant acknowledgment of it.

DO not therefore condemn any one for being ſomewhat ſhy of reproof, for a man muſt be brutiſh, if his heart doth not burn within him when he is told of a failing; becauſe the natural ſenſe of honour and love of innocence, which reſides in man, makes him a reſtleſs Auditor of his own demerits.

BUT ſuppoſing the caſe is ſo that our reproof is really rejected, and they *turn and rent us* for our good-will; let us examin whether we do not adminiſter the reproof unhandily.

For we ſhould not content our ſelves with the bare act of reproving, but we ſhould do it with all imaginable prudence and candor; we ſhould ſhew what an ungrateful office 'tis to us by our delay, our ſecret and modeſt application of it; by our earneſtneſs we ſhould manifeſt that we were forc'd

to it by the concern we have for our friend. Not like ſome, who by their oſtentation may more genuinely be reckon'd to upbraid and domineer, than to chide and lovingly reprove their friend: Oh! how do they Magiſterially Lord over thoſe they catch in any thing that is culpable; ſuch carriage blabs out the ſecret of their heart, that they more delight to mock their friends for their defects, than pity them, and wiſh for their amendment, as it behoves honeſt Monitors: alas! how can we hope to mould another into humility through the cutting ſenſe of his ſin, when the very poſture of our reproof proclaims us to be exhalted in our conceptions of our ſelves.

2. IN applying Reproof we muſt avoid Precipitancy, we muſt watch for the moſt convenient Seaſon, follow the Offender in his Retirement, when his Paſſion is laid aſleep, and we are in the moſt ſerene mode; then our judgment is cleareſt, for then we ſhall be guided in Judgment, our ſlow and mild procedure in the reproof will ſuggeſt, that our

our Charity conſtrained us, that 'twas not a jealous Whimſy that hurried us; and if he ſhould be diſturb'd at our Advice, *a ſoft Anſwer will beat back his wrath, but haſty words ſtir up anger* rather than penitence: Some do ſo greedily heap Checks without any intermiſſion upon their friends, that they have been like oyl caſt into a fire, encreaſing but not abating the flame; and whil'ſt they have endeavour'd by violence to pluck up ill habits, which have grown ſtrong by degrees, have left the roots firm ſtill behind, and nouriſht them more and more, by putting their own ſpirits into a ferment, and exaſperating the ſmall commotion of the reprov'd party, till it breaks out into turbulent paſſions, and that at laſt ſears them with obſtinacy, which blinds men with ſuch a fond love for their bad cuſtoms; that no counſel, no ſtratagem of kindneſs can ever perſwade them to be divorc'd from them.

WISE Reprovers muſt imitate the Divine Spirit, which convicts and converts us with a *ſtill ſmall voice*, leiſurely

ly warming our minds with good reſolutions; when he obſerves us moſt fit to receive, and hear him; *He ſpeaks once, yea twice, in a dream, in a viſion of the night, when deep ſleep falls upon men, in ſlumbrings upon the bed, then he opens the ears of men, and ſeals their inſtruction*; then he withdraws them from evil purpoſes, when their paſſions are compos'd; *then* they glow with good deſires, *then* they return to God and themſelves; and when reproof is thus given it ought to be kindly receiv'd; but if it be apply'd otherwiſe, Chriſtian charity obligeth us to put the beſt conſtruction upon it, and therefore we ſhould never reject it. For ſuppoſing that our Conſcience may not accuſe us of what our friend kindly indicts againſt us, yet, it will incline us to ſearch more deeply into our hearts, to reflect upon our lives more, and be more watchful for the future; that if it is poſſible, we may give no offence, living unblamably and peaceably with all men; the reproof of a friend certainly will always deſerve eſteem,

eſteem, ſince the reproaches of an enemy, and his cenſures prove very often inſtruments of good to us. To conclude this Head, *Whoſo loves inſtruction loveth knowledge, but he that hateth reproofs is brutiſh.* You may further be largely inſtructed about the Government of the Tongue, if you will conſult the Proverbs, *Prov.* 12. 18, 19. & 15. 2. and many other places. We hope that we need not make a long Exhortation to our Reader, to put in practice this method of Ordinary Converſation; for let men but conſider, that they ſhall be judg'd for every idle word at the laſt day; that they ſhall be examin'd, what improvement they have made of their Sociable capacities; and withal what conſternation and agony of mind they will be overwhelm'd with, when they reflect upon the eternal loſs of thoſe opportunities which they have abuſed; they will acknowledge a chearful allegiance to be due to what hath been here offer'd to their peruſal and favourable judgment.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Treating of Extraordinary Converſation. In this Section the Religious Societies are vindicated by Scripture, Teſtimonies of the moſt Primitive Fathers, and ſeveral other reaſons.

HAVING diſpatch'd our thoughts concerning Ordinary Converſation, and prov'd the advantages which follow a due uſe of it, we come now to ſpeak of Extraordinary Converſation, the diſcourſing about which was the chief end of our writing this Treatiſe.

NOW though Extraordinary Converſation may denote all converſe which Chriſtians have with one another on the Lords-day, on which they ought not to *ſpeak their own words*; yet, by it we mean only a ſet and private Aſſembly of ſincere Chriſtians, diſtinct from Publick Congregations, which meet together on the Lords day, and other Sacred Feſtivals; to edifie one another in the Chriſtian Faith and Practice;

ctice; many of which have been lately erected, and are ſtill continued in the City and Suburbs of *London*, and *Glocester*, &c. commonly called the Religious Societies.

NOW that ſuch Societies are not diſagreeable to the Laws of Chriſtianity, we may gather from the Apoſtles, and Primitive Chriſtians; for we read in *Act.* 12. that when St. *Peter* was deliver'd out of the Priſon, he went into the Houſe of *Mary* the Mother of *John*, *Where many were gather'd together praying:* Now this cannot be underſtood of Publick Congregations, for they do not meet in private Houſes, nor of the performance of Family-duties, for they were *many gather'd together*; and therefore we have no ſmall reaſon to gueſs, that they were ſome Chriſtians who met together to pray, who nevertheleſs beſides frequented the Publick Worſhip, for the time of their meeting was in the night.

There are alſo many paſſages in the moſt Primitive Fathers, which very plainly imply; that in thoſe times ſuch Societies

Societies as our Christian ones, were upheld. St. *Barnabas* who was St. *Paul's* Fellow-labourer, writes to the Christians thus in his Catholick Epistle, *"You "ought not separately "to withdraw your "selves, as if ye were "justified, but you "should meet together to inquire of "one another, what is most convenient and profitable for the beloved, for "the Scripture saith, *Wo unto them "who are wise by themselves, and prudent in their own eyes.* And in another place, * "Thou "shalt not cleave from "thy soul unto the "proud, but shalt list "thy self among the righteous and "humble. And St. *Clement* in his Epistle to the *Corinthians* gives them this Testimony, with great joy, † "You have been "Solicitous together "day

* *Non separatim debetis seducere vos, tanquam justificati; sed in unum convenientes inquirite, quod communiter dilectis conveniat & prosit*, &c.

* Ἀλλὰ κατὰ δικαίων καὶ ταπεινῶν ἀναγραφήσῃ.

‡ Ἀγῶν ἦν ὑμῖν ἡμέρας τε καὶ νυκτὸς ὑπὲρ πάσης τῆς ἀδελφότητος, εἰς τὸ σώζεσθαι μετ' ἐλέους καὶ συνειδήσεως τὸν ἄριθμον τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν αὐτοῦ.

"day and night, for the ſake of the "Brotherhood, that you might ſave "the number of the Elect, with your "mercy and conſcientiouſneſs.

And *Tertullian* in his Apologetick ſays, * "When honeſt "and good Men meet "together, when pi- "ous and chaſt perſons "are gather'd toge- "ther, they ought not to be call'd a "faction but a lawful Council.

**Cum probi, cum boni coeunt, cum pii, cum caſti congregantur, non eſt factio dicenda, ſed curia.*

NOW if thoſe of our new Religious Societies meet together to promote piety and goodneſs; if they do not make a diſturbance in our Church, they may boldly make the ſame appeal which that Father made in the behalf of the Chriſtians in his time, to whoſe harm do we meet together? Theſe places and many others, which we could produce (were we not averſe againſt ſtuffing many pages with Citations) ſufficiently manifeſt, how highly the Primitive Chriſtians eſteem'd Sociableneſs in Religious Duties, by their continual Aſſemblies as well private as publick.

THUS

THUS also, *Pliny Junior* in one of his Epistles informs the Emperor *Trajan* concerning the Christians, that they were wont to meet together at an appointed time before day, to sing a Hymn to their God, whom they call'd Christ; and saith, That there was a little Bill in which some Names were written, and more to that purpose; which Meetings he calls *Hetæriæ*, which word plainly shews, that they were friendly and communicative in their Meetings; for he borrowed it from the *Greeks*, with whom ἑταιρία signifies a Society of Friends and Equals; for such they reckon'd one another.

INDEED 'tis probable that the Devout *Jews* had some such custom; for in the Third Chapter of the Prophet *Malachy* it is plainly couch'd, who acquaints us (when the *Jews* had enhanced the anger of God against them by their Rebellion, Adulteries, Perjuries, Sacrilege, Idolatry, and other abominable crimes; which were so commonly committed by them, so that the good and righteous *Israelites* were derided

rided amongſt them) *verſ.* 16. That *then, they that feared the Lord ſpake often one to another, and the Lord hearken'd, and heard it, and a Book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.* And goes on *verſ.* 17, 18. *And they ſhall be mine, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, in the day when I make up my jewels, and I will ſpare them as a man ſpareth his own Son that ſerveth him; then ſhall ye return and diſcern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that ſerveth God, and him that ſerveth him not.*

NOW we may aſſure our ſelves, that our Saviour did not abrogate any uſeful Cuſtom, which the Jews had; and that he who was the great Preacher of Love and brotherly Kindneſs, would as willingly have his Diſciples to the ends of the World, to be always as ready to exchange words of Conſolation and ſpiritual Refreſhments with one another, when the Flouds of Iniquity inviron them, and ſtrive to weigh down their Souls to the nether-

moſt Hell, as well as thoſe good *Jews* to whom God ſo ſolemnly promiſed remarkable Bleſſings and Honours by his Prophet.

BUT to return to the primitive Practice, did the Zeal of thoſe Chriſtians ſo powerfully in oppoſition to all their Troubles and Perſecutions, when they were ſo widely diſperſed, enſpirit them to meet together in loving Bodies and Fraternities · that they might ſupport their Faith, leſt it ſhould be ſhipwrack'd; pillar their ſinking Hopes; nouriſh and heat their God-like Spirits, with frequent inculcations of divine Truths? did they form ſacred Societies to beg earneſtly of God to forgive and convert their Enemies, (who revil'd, threaten'd and plundered them, diſturb'd their Peace, and laid in ambuſh for their Ruin) and that they might perſevere to the laſt? did they deny Reſt to their Eye-lids, to pour out their Complaints together before God, and like the three Servants of God in the fiery Furnace, to praiſe and laud the Name of

of the moſt high, making an unanimous melody unto the Lord?

DID they wait in ſeaſon, and out of ſeaſon, for the latter and former Rain of his heavenly Grace, and the Effuſion of his holy Spirit; that they might be able to break in pieces the Snares of the Devil, bear the Affronts of malicious men without offering Violence to their Lives, or refuſing to embrace for the ſake of Chriſt and his Religion the moſt cruel Deaths, which were or could be inflicted by Pagan Authority on them? did they produce the Fruits of their meeting thus, by vindicating the Religion they profeſſed, with the eloquent Patience of their ſuffering Lives, and the Courage of their vocal Blood when they were by God called to ſeal his Truth with it? Did they do all this and more than we can expreſs or conceive? and ſhall we who are ſhaded with Proſperity and Peace; when every one is ſitting under his Vine, and enjoys the Fruits of his own Fig-tree, not be Rivals of their vehement

Zeal and Magnanimity? Can we think that we who have all Bleſſings inviſibly diſtill'd from above into our Boſoms, ought not to emulate as high Degrees of Piety, as they, who were toſs'd about in a harraſs'd and exile ſtate of Life? O Stupidity! how does *the God of this World bewitch us*? *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh People and unwiſe*? Surely, moſt will be expected from our hands, who are compaſſed about with the greateſt Opportunities. Had the primitive Zealots of our Church never upbraided our Sloth, Ingratitude, and Degeneracy, with their watchful Lives, and valiant Deaths; and by hunting after, and ſeizing on all Opportunities of glorifying their contemned Maſter together; yet our uncontroul'd Liberty of Acknowledging the Chriſtian Faith, Deliverance after Deliverance, Line after Line, Precept after Precept, innumerable Bleſſings of the left hand, overcaſt with Clouds of right hand ones, ſhould with the magnetick Force of natural ingenuity, and Gratitude, have drawn

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us into the hallowed Habitation of God's Ordinances, to recognize his mercies, to commemorate the infinite Love of a dying and all glorious Jeſus; and to court acquaintance with the moſt humble and devout there; that in after meetings we might be Goads of Alacrity in this Pilgrimage of Faith to one another, when ſo many Heatheniſh Chriſtians ſhake their Heads at thoſe who exert a tender Senſe of their Duty; crying *where is your God? who is the Lord, that we ſhould ſerve him*, or fall down humbly before him? Certainly 'tis time now, *yea, the full time is come*, wherein good and zealous Members of the *Engliſh* Church ought to join in Leagues with one another, that they may by uniting themſelves make up the brighteſt Conſtellation of Religion and Vertue; that they may dazle the Eyes of all that behold them; that the Atheiſtical and Profane, who cry, that *Vertue is a meer empty Name*, may be ſtruck dumb by the terrible and confounding Luſtre and Reſplendency of many

worthy Examples; and the irregularity of our diſſenting Brethren, who found their Separation upon the Enormities, or at leaſt, the Lukewarmneſs of our Profeſſors, may be exploded. How can any one be a good Chriſtian who refuſeth to encourage ſuch Societies, which will bring Religion into Credit again? and by this method Mercy and Truth will be eſtabliſhed among us. By coming to ſuch Aſſemblies, every ſincere Chriſtian will be heartned not to be aſham'd of Chriſt, may chuſe out of many, ſome Companion or ſome Friend, who ſuits his Temper, Age, and Quality; one to whom he may unboſom himſelf, and empty the Secrets of his Soul; one that will mourn with him when he mourns, and rejoice with him when he rejoiceth; one who by the divine Bleſſing ſhall be a Staff to him when he is ready to faint in his Journey, and a gentle Spur to him, if through Proſperity he begins to loyter; an Oracle in his Doubts; a Phyſician when his Soul is in a crazy State; and an Angel

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in his Deſertions; one, who by his Humility, will inoffenſively pluck down your tow'ring Spirit by his Chaſtity and Mortification, will ſhame your wild Appetites; and by his Chriſtian manlineſs convey into you a courageous Spirit and holy Magnanimity; in ſhort, one good Chriſtian may be a God to his Fellow, for God many times appoints his eminent Servants to be Stewards under him of Faith, Hope, Charity, and other divine Graces, by diſtributing them to others, out of that Abundance which is originally his own Bounty.

BUT moreover, if we rightly conſider; this extraordinary Converſation, which we now recommend, is very neceſſary, for as men (had not God conſecrated one day in the Week to be ſpent wholly in his Service) if they had had a Grant of Chooſing what days they thought fit for his Honour, would have been very ſtingy in their Allowance of Time for holy Exerciſes; and ſeldom or never have compenſated their Omiſſions at ordinary

times with the Obſervation of ſome extraordinary Seaſons, (for alas! they betray themſelves ſo by their Neglect of the Lord's Day now, though 'tis commanded to be kept Holy; that it may be juſtly ſuppoſed, had man been put to his choice to have ſet apart for God's Worſhip only what times he thought fit, he would have behaved himſelf like the Beaſts that periſh) which 'tis probable is the chief Cauſe why God appointed a ſet Day himſelf; ſo this is the Reaſon why we are ſo often caught in idle diſcourſe in ordinary Converſation, becauſe we never oblige our ſelves to any ſet times for extraordinary, which would be of great uſe, both to expiate the paſt ſuperfluities of our Tongues; and to prevent them for the future; for by reſorting at ſome extraordinary times, eſpecially on the Lord's Day, into ſuch Converſation where we ſhall be overawed by the Preſence of devout Chriſtians, and ſhall be aſhamed to make any Digreſſion from vertuous and commendable Diſcourſe, by which Help we

we being cloſely engaged in ſerious and heavenly Language, till it powerfully affects our Hearts; what by the Participation of the publick Ordinances; and what by our private Joining together in religious Duties with good Chriſtians, together with ſome Interſperſions of Cloſet-Offices, the whole Day will be dedicated as it ought to be, without any gleanings of Vanity, and Remiſneſs in God's Service; which will fill our Souls with ſuch chearful Reflections, that we ſhall be charmed by them to keep a ſtricter Sentry over our Mouths all the week long; leſt by our careleſs and treacherous Words we let in ſome deformed Thoughts and Reflections which will ſcratch our Minds, and tear thoſe Joys with a Crown of Thorns.

WHEREAS on the contrary, thoſe who ſpend the greateſt part of the Lord's Day in Solitarineſs, too often ſhare it between God and their vain Thoughts. And 'tis an Obſervation which can eſcape no one who takes but a little notice of the World, that thoſe who

who don't ſeek out for good Company, either publickly give an Offence, by herding with thoſe who count that Day Common, which God has commanded to be Hallowed with the cleaneſt Thoughts, Words and Actions: Or elſe they ſlumber it away, when 'tis our Duty to exert the greateſt Activity and Sprightlineſs in holy Exerciſes, and beſides, their lazy obſervance of ſome pious Duties are wont to be tainted with Pride; for they are apt to think that they have done ſomewhat which none beſides themſelves have regarded: for by comparing themſelves with the profligate and inconſiderate Multitude, they will count themſelves the Darlings of God, and exclude all but themſelves from a Seat in the Kingdom of Heaven, which is very dangerous; for thoſe who are proud and uncharitable, are not fit to war againſt the Devil, becauſe ſuch Tempers of Mind glue them ſo faſt to him, that they cannot fight heartily for God, and therefore they will be disbanded by him, *who reſiſteth the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*

Now

Now the ſureſt Way of attaining to the Grace of Humility is, to enter into the Council of his Saints; for by obſerving what high Degrees many amongſt them have commenc'd in the School of Piety; how far their Seraphick Ardency, and the Stature of their Graces exceed our poor Attainments in Religion; we ſhall become very little in our Opinion of our ſelves, and be raiſed with more vigorous Principles to prove eminent Inſtruments of Good in the World; we ſhall be convinced that we cannot exerciſe religious Duties ſociably too frequently; we hereby ſhall benefit our ſelves and others too, and be both directed and enlivened to perform with the greateſt Abaſement and Extenſiveneſs of Heart thoſe Duties in our Retirements for our being frequently influenc'd by the piercing Impreſſions of the beſt Chriſtians Examples, (which are but ſo many Rays of the omnipreſent Sun of Righteouſneſs) will force us to take ſuch Care of our Souls and Actions, that if God's Grace and our humble

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Industry can effect it, they will be without Spot or Wrinkle, and our Lives will be as Lamps of Vertue to the World; that so moving in the highest Sphere of Vertue here, we may come to shine as Stars of the greatest magnitude in the prime Orb of Glory, by enjoying that great God, who is the Firmament, in which, and by which, the vast World of happy Spirits keep in their harmonious, swift and unchangeable Motion.

BUT if our Christian Reader is so devoid of all sparks of generosity, as not to be rouz'd out of his partial affection for the laziest duties of Religion, by such an inviting prospect, let him be alarm'd with those dangers which surround the authority of Religion and Piety in the world; Satan now drudgeth very busily to destroy Mankind, not only fomenting in them some faint inclinations to wickedness, and continually levelling his envenom'd darts against their souls, but he hath also stock'd the world with numerous legions of incarnate Devils; men that are

are ſo deeply tinctur'd with his nature, that they are become impudent Patrons of his Deluſions, privy to his Politicks, and thoſe who are always contriving to emblazon the glory of the Kingdom of Darkneſs; and therefore they have not only abdicated Conſcience of that Government, which is its native prerogative, and in which God hath inſtated it; but alſo have proclaim'd their intent of murdering the Conſcience of others by erecting Debauch'd Clubs, and Drunken Cabals, that their confederate malice may make the Caſtles of Vice the ſtronger, and may raze Religion from its very foundations, ſhouting aloud, *down with it, down with it even to the ground.* Is there not therefore an abſolute neceſſity to confront publickly, and to pitch our Tents in Religious Societies, that ſober Heroes by the combination of their love, charity, and the intereſt which their Prayers will find in the Court of Heaven, may put to flight theſe aliens of humane nature in Battel. The excellent Members of our Church

Church ſurely cannot but be provok'd by the impudence of the profane, to have a controverſie with their modeſty, and to remember that their confidence ought not to be dampt by any difficulties in the cauſe of the Lord of Hoſts, who will enable them to diſcomfit thoſe who bid defiance to all that glitters but with the gloſs of vertue and goodneſs. Oh! therefore let good Chriſtians encamp themſelves together, that by the flaming luſtre of their united Excellencies, they may humble the aſpiring ſpirit of vice, prove how daſtardly and fearful it is, when Vertue walks in proceſſion, and publickly unfolds its colours, that the counſels of Hell being thus infatuated, and all its dark machinations being broke in pieces, the innate eſteem which all Men have for Vertue and Goodneſs may be reviv'd; a new Reſurrection of Piety may be wrought among us without a Miracle; and Chriſtian Righteouſneſs, *which exceeds the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees*, may

may deſcend from the Battlements of Heaven upon our Land, in a Triumphant Chariot, and all men may ſee and know, that her Towers of defence, and Rocks of ſtrength are placed on high, which the Gates of Hell can never approach to ſhake. Oh! what a large crop of Graces would ſprout forth and abound on the Earth? But we dare not expatiate upon this antipaſt of the Quinteſſence of Heaven's Joys, becauſe our tranſport if yielded to would betray us to ramble at once both out of our ſelves and our ſubject.

SINCE wickedneſs begins to uſurp a face of authority, ſo that the prudence, counſel, temper, and example of private perſons cannot blunt the edge of its axes, and many times it gives a woful gaſh to thoſe who have heart enough but to lightly touch it, 'tis neceſſary for the good and vertuous Profeſſors not only to frequent the Temple, which now a days is too common

mon an Aſylum of Hypocriſie, with a mixt crowd; but alſo to form themſelves into diſtinct bodies, for 'tis probable that a number may procure what ſolitary attempts have fell ſhort of; for ſince the good Angels with their valiant Archangel, in a Regiment rank'd under the ſame Banners, routed the Dragon and his Apoſtate ſpirits, therefore good men ſhould imitate them, by linking together their Faith, Knowledge, Fortitude, *&c.* that they may quench the fiery darts of the Devil, and overthrow all his Emiſſaries.

BUT though ſome grant this advice to be neceſſary, yet they pretend that there are great reaſons which may be given, why theſe Religious Societies are hurtful, and ſhould not be allow'd; for firſt, ſay they, they miniſter to vain glory, becauſe a remarkable ſeparation of the good from the bad cannot be made without oſtentation, cenſoriouſneſs, and encroaching upon God's

God's Prerogative, who will ſeparate the good and bad at the laſt day. And further, that we have not a command in Scripture for ſuch a cuſtom, neither is it neceſſary to Salvation.

THESE Objections as fair as they ſeem, if we unmask them, will appear to be otherwiſe, and therefore in anſwering them we will go ſtep by ſtep.

1. THEN, we deſire thoſe who object againſt Religious Societies, becauſe they may miniſter to vain glory, to conſider, that for the ſame reaſon we might refuſe to go to Church, and receive the Sacrament, which are poſitive duties, ſince there Satan frequently preſents himſelf among the Sons of God; for they being Sociable Duties ſo much neglected, and therefore of a diſtinguiſhing nature in our days, in the performance of them, we may have vain glorious thoughts caſt into our minds; but however, if we pluck

the ſting out preſently, it will not hurt us. 'Tis the duty of all Chriſtians both to do their duty, and to watch againſt the leaven of malice, and vain glory in the doing of it, to weed ſuch thoughts out of our minds, before they over-run them; for if we reſiſt the Devil he will flee from us; but indeed if men give place to him, he is ſubtile enough to ſecure us againſt vain glory, or ſpiritual pride, by diſcouraging us with ſuch fears, from medling with this or any holy undertakings.

NOW then if thoſe who enter into the Religious Societies preſerve themſelves from being vain glorious, upon the account of their being engag'd in them (which by God's grace they may do) they are ſafe, and if the world cenſure them nevertheleſs to be ſo, it will lie at their doors; ſince in the Religious Societies they take care, more peculiarly to caution one another againſt vain glory and oſtentation, and meet

meet together to bring goodneſs into faſhion amongſt us that it may thrive; and good examples may be ſuch common ſpectacles in our Kingdom, as to give others no occaſion to judge them to be ſingular and vain glorious; in a word, that a wicked man may be an unuſual Monſter, as a ſincere and zealous Chriſtian now is; for whoſoever now exerts any zeal for Chriſtianity, is gaz'd and ſtar'd at by the Generality as if he were Lunatick.

2. THOSE who tax them with Cenſoriouſneſs, and encroaching upon God's Prerogative, who will ſeparate the good and the bad at the laſt day, are deſir'd to receive this anſwer.

THIS Separation which Religious Societies cauſe, is not a Separation from mens perſons but their vices; and if they forewarn one another againſt fellowſhip with notorious ſinners, whoſe crimes go before them to *judgment*, they do not by avoiding them, raſhly determine their final ſentence (which is the

buſineſs of the laſt Judgment) but only modeſtly condemn them, by ſhunning their wicked practices, and pulling others out of the fire, which is an act of ſelf-preſervation, and that diſcreet love which God approves of, and therefore cannot truly be accounted an uſurpation of God's Prerogative. For tho' they meet thus, that they may ſeparate themſelves from the unclean, and thoſe whoſe contagious leproſie is very conſpicuous, whereſoever they are; yet, they do not excommunicate them in their judgments, nor withdraw themſelves from the pale of our Church, and a participation with them in the Ordinances; they do not there ſtand at a diſtance, and cry to the diſorderly, We are holier than ye. No, when ever they ſee them there, they entertain the moſt charitable hopes of their amendment, and pray together in their private Aſſemblies for their Converſion, and inſtruct one another in the wiſeſt arts of reclaiming their careleſs and unthoughtful acquaintance from their follies; neither

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is this pragmatical in them, ſince they do not divulge the ſins of their inconſiderate Neighbours, but pity and exhort them privately, even to the hazard of their own temporal credit and eſteem, remembring that they who are indebted to God and his good Miniſters for their turning from ſin to the ways of righteouſneſs, are oblig'd in gratitude, to promote the fruitfulneſs of their gracious perſwaſions as much as they can; and to expreſs the charity and courage of Chriſtians without the ſcornful look of a Phariſee, or invading the authority of Miniſters.

3. But however the main thing (as they think) is ſtill unanſwer'd, namely that 'tis not neceſſary to Salvation, for there is no poſitive command for it in Scripture, and therefore ſince 'tis ſo hard to live up to what is there enjoyn'd already, why ſhould men impoſe new and burdenſome Injunctions?

TO thoſe Objectors we give this reply: It muſt be confeſs'd, that when any thing which is not to be found commanded in Scripture, is impoſed upon

us as abſolutely neceſſary to Salvatio n it behoves Chriſtians to make a ſcrutiny about it;but we do not aſſert that to be, or not to be a member of a Religious Society, is a matter of Salvation or Damnation. Nay further, we will grant that ſuch Societies are not poſitively commanded in Holy Writ: Nevertheleſs ſince St. *Peter*'s Converts, and the Primitive Chriſtians, (who doubtleſs were far more curious for their cuſtoms and manner of life, than the Chriſtians of this Age) did meet together, as our Religious Societies do, after the Publick Worſhip, with reverence and modeſty muſt bind good Chriſtians to make uſe of ſuch opportunities when offer'd to them; and ſince ſuch advantages attend a circumſpect Sociableneſs in Religious Duties, we ſhould rid our ſelves from a carnal fear of being too good, and with the briskeſt ſallies of a joyful heart careſs ſuch happy occaſions, when thruſt into our power. of ſtirring up our ſenſe of God and affection for goodneſs; for the Scripture doth not ſtint us in the mea-

meaſures of Holineſs, but *whatſoever things are juſt, whatſoever things are laudable and lovely*, &c. it adviſeth us to think, ſpeak of, and do all ſuch things as oft as we can. And ſurely unleſs the things of this world have very much engroſſed mens threats, they may allow themſelves a little time to enflame their charity, to leſſen their opinion of their own worth, that they may be excited to haſten the quicker in their ſpiritual progreſs, to diſcipline their tongues, and to give a good example to others, by praying and conſulting together on the Lords-day, which Cuſtom whether it is uſeful or not let the unprejudic'd Reader judge.

4. WE muſt not omit to anſwer another formidable Objection; namely, That they are fanatical, tending to Schiſm, the contempt of our Clergy, and the Laws of the Land. But pray, why are they Fanatical? What, becauſe thoſe who diſſent from our Church, have broke out into manifeſt tokens of extravagant zeal, and unwarrantable factions, muſt all there-

fore who wear the livery and badge of Christianity, suffer for their sake? Must we for the sake of their folly, make no distinction between an intemperate and well govern'd zeal? How came those disorderly persons, who break off Communion with the best Church, to monopolize all that is grave and serious to their faction? Sure we are that our Church of *England*, by the decency of her Celebration of the Publick Ordinances, the Articles of her Faith, and the Purity of her Doctrine, doth as strictly encourage all of her Communion, as assiduously, and earnestly to contend after an advancement in holiness, as any Church in the world.

WHY therefore should those among us, who strive to honour and obey our Church by living up to what they profess, be scornfully cast out of the Class of her dutiful Sons, and condemn'd as Schismaticks, than which name none in our opinion can be more deservedly ignominious? Is it because they in spight of all hardships, and the reproaches

ches with which thoſe who ought moſt to love and honour them, abuſe them, conſtantly follow the Captain of their Salvation? Is it becauſe the members of theſe Societies have both by their liberal Contributions, and their frequent preſence, encourag'd the daily Prayers, and the Celebration of Weekly Sacraments in ſeveral of the Pariſh Churches in *London*? Is it becauſe they carry themſelves with moderation towards all men, but will admit none into fellowſhip with them in their ſet Societies for peace and good orders ſake, except thoſe who are members of the Church of *England*?

IS it becauſe they wiſh well to the Reformation, which was lately begun, and we hope will be carried on?

NO ſurely; for all this tends naturally to the honour of our Church, and may ſufficiently vindicate them from deſerving that nick-name of Sobriety and Chriſtian Zeal, Fanaticiſm.

AGAIN, pray how do they diſparage our Clergy? our moſt Reverend Metropolitan, with other right Reverend

rend Fathers of our Church, and many Learned and Judicious Pastors have perused their Orders, and approv'd of them; which surely they would never have done, had they border'd upon Schism, or any thing like it. It rejoyced them to see their many excellent Labours to begin to grow fruitful, for one design of their meeting is to improve the Publick Ordinances, by using some Prayers which are taken mostly out of the Liturgy; that they may by repeating them recall some wandrings in the House of God; and may inculcate the word heard more vigorously on one anothers minds and affections; and mind themselves of that love and strict innocency, which becomes those who have renew'd their Covenant at the Holy Table on the Lord's-day.

AND now since the Clergy of the Church of *England* have given their approbation, we need not fear that any of the *English* Laws forbid them, for they do not meddle any further about Religious Matters, than to prevent Assemblies, which may raise Sedition in the

the State, of which we need not ſuſpect that theſe Societies will ever be guilty; being made up of perſons, who are members of a Church, which is a conſtant friend to Monarchy, and whoſe Doctrine gives her Sons the moſt Soveraign Antidotes againſt the curſed practices of Rebellion. In a word, theſe Chriſtians when they meet, only plot together to ſave one anothers Souls.

NOW we think that we have ſaid enough to baffle the moſt popular Objections, which have been brought againſt theſe Religious Societies, and 'tis to be fear'd, that theſe ſlight Objections take their riſe from our corrupt hearts; for our ſouls whilſt they are immur'd with fleſh being very unwieldy in Spiritual Exerciſes, we are tempted too often to diſpute that right, which God hath to the love and ſervice of all our ſoul, heart, mind, time and ſtrength; this is without doubt the reaſon why ſome (though well inclin'd) have ſhrunk back at the Propoſal of ſuch Societies; and alſo why ſome

Maſters

Maſters and Parents have forbad thoſe that are under them, to go near theſe Societies, but we preſume to put them in mind, that the better Chriſtians any are, the more faithful their Servants, and the more dutiful their Children will be; and therefore they ſhould not diſcourage them from ſuch good Exerciſes; for if the deſign is of God (which we need not queſtion) as it does, ſo it will ſtand; and therefore 'tis the wiſdom of thoſe who have proclaim'd War againſt them, by erecting debauch'd Clubs, and abuſive and unjuſt Calumnies, to take warning, before 'tis too late, leſt in the end by fighting againſt them, they miſerably perceive and repent that they have fought againſt God, who is jealous of his honour, and will not hold them guiltleſs.

SECT.

SECT. II.

Explaining the proper Qualifications of thoſe who deſign to be members of the Religious Societies.

WE have already vindicated Religious Societies ſeveral ways, and we hope convinc'd all good Chriſtians of the neceſſity and uſefulneſs of their deſign; but becauſe ſome who haſtily and without preparation, have liſted themſelves in Religious Societies, but do not through the remiſſneſs of their carriage anſwer the noble intention of them; and many times being not well grounded in Religion at firſt, have withdrawn for little or no reaſon at all from them; and ſo their latter end hath been worſe than the firſt, which hath introduced a Spiritual Lethargy and lukewarmneſs into theſe Societies; which if continued will be as bad as if there were no Religious Societies at all: That therefore their ſcandal may be wip'd away for the future, and

and the abuſe may not ſcare honeſt, but weak Chriſtians from venturing to uſe them; we will firſt ſhew what qualifications are requiſite before Chriſtians engage themſelves in Religious Societies; for we muſt not think that a few good deſires, and a meerly moral life is ſufficient to qualifie us ſo as to make ſuch a good uſe of the undertaking, that it may accompliſh thoſe Glorious ends which have been already mentioned.

NOW 'tis needleſs to take notice, that they muſt by frequently practiſing the Rules already preſcrib'd for Ordinary Converſation, be well experienc'd in them; before they can be rightly fitted to make a due uſe of extraordinary; they muſt be perſons of integrity, peaceable, uſeful and induſtrious in the world; for how ſhould men ever expect that they ſhould climb to the top of Vertue, before they are Maſters of the lower Branches?

BUT there is more than all that comes to, for their minds muſt be poſſeſs'd with a weighty ſenſe of the neceſſity,

ceſſity, obligation, and importance of Religion, being perſwaded *that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wiſdom*; and therefore they muſt be ſuch as are mov'd with that principle by faſting, ſelf denial, and frequent retirement, *to cleanſe themſelves from all filthineſs both of fleſh and ſpirit*, that they may *live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world; keeping a Conſcience void of offence, both towards God and men.* And their motives muſt be more noble than the convenience of Godlineſs in this preſent life, ſuch as credit, health, friends, *&c.* they muſt be fortify'd with a ſteddy faith (which is their victory over the world) *that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*, that ſo they may take a delight in the doing of his Commandments; but above all they muſt throughly ſift their hearts, leſt the advancement of their worldly intereſt, popular applauſe, and ſuch mean ends be their main inducement to enter into theſe Societies; for the moſt Heavenly aims ought to make way for their admiſſion

miſſion into ſuch a holy League; ſuch as the honour of God, the reſtauration of Chriſtian Piety which languiſhes ſo much now, the edification of their Brethren, and the daily improvement of their own Souls in Grace and Goodneſs. Theſe purpoſes if ſubſcrib'd to by the hearty aſſent of your minds after a mature deliberation, without making any extraordinary noiſe about it to your acquaintance at your firſt onſet, will give the greateſt ſecurity to you of perſevering in the good courſe of life, you propoſe to your ſelf, which method will far excell the flaſhes of a Spiritual phrenſie, and empty dreams of Religion, which God never reveal'd to Mankind, heats which expire in the minutes of their birth, and a Specimen of Vertue which like the morning cloud, and early dew, ſoon paſſeth away. For as the degrees of Glory in Heaven are various, ſo are alſo the degrees of Vertue by which we aſcend into Heaven: 'Tis but Romance, when ſilly people prate in their deluding ſlumbers of jumping out of the deepeſt lake

lake of ſin and ſenſuality, into an intimate familiarity with the Divine Nature; for the fear of the Lord, as we took notice before, is the beginning and primer of Wiſdom; humility is the firmeſt baſis of Religion; upon which he who founds his Structure of Vertue, has fixt it upon a Rock, which when the floods ariſe, the winds blow, and the ſtorms beat againſt it, will ſtand unmoveable.

2. WHEN a perſon by care and diligence hath fitted himſelf for enrolling his name in the Catalogue of the Saints, he ſhould not be too much tranſported with the meer novelty of the thing, and the promiſing ſound of Religion; he ſhould not imbibe all reports upon truſt, for good natur'd and a flexible credulity hath betray'd very many to ſwallow down gilded poyſon, but he ſhould inform himſelf of the Methods which theſe Religious Societies uſe, of their Diſcipline and Rules by which they walk; that he may conſider aforehand, how to contrive his affairs ſo, as to anſwer the expectation

of his fellow-members, and the Vows which he ſhall lay upon his own ſoul; and that if there is any injunction, which may offend him, he may diſcloſe it to ſome of them, that his ſcruple may be remov'd, either by his being fully ſatisfy'd about it, or their altering of the cuſtom if good reaſons be given for it.

MATTERS being thus well weigh'd, if he determines to conſent, under Gods bleſſing, he will be the more aſſur'd of ſticking to his reſolutions. But that the Enterprize may ſucceed the better he ſhould, remembring that 'tis a very ſolemn one, ſet apart ſome time, to pray that God may direct his Counſels, and give a bleſſing to his undertaking, and then offer his Vow of reſorting into the Society of the Righteous, and promiſing for the future, *not to know a wicked perſon*, (*viz.*) not to be confederate with him in his wickedneſs; which Vow he ſhould ſeal, and ſtrengthen, the next Sacrament he receives.

CER-

CERTAINLY this Method is far more convenient, than a raſh way of ruſhing into Religious Societies, which many times hath rather prov'd a ſnare than an Anchor ſure and ſtedfaſt to ſuch giddy ſouls.

WHEREAS this way honours the Undertaking, when it gives ſatisfaction to the cloſeſt conſideration; for ſuch deſigns the more they are thought on, the more lovely they will appear; whence we may gather, that if any one finds himſelf not diſpos'd, and ſufficient for it, 'tis beſt for him to delay entrance and prepare himſelf as quickly as he can for it.

SECT. III.

Concerning ſome Civil Canons and Religious Exerciſes, proper to be obſerv'd when Chriſtians meet together in Societies.

HAVING given ſome Directions concerning a proper method of prequalifying our ſelves before we admit our ſelves into Religious Societies, we come now to ſhew what they are to do when they are admitted; and here we ſhall firſt recommend ſome Civil Canons, and decent Diſcipline for the Regulation of Societies.

I. THEREFORE we adviſe them to uſe a Form of Prayer, for without Controverſie that is moſt convenient for the uſe of Perſons met together.

II. LET every Member read the Prayers in his turn.

III. LET the ſame Perſon which reads the Prayers, act the part of a Steward.

IV. LET

IV. LET this Perſon, who acts the part of a Steward, never admit any one into the Society, before a ſatisfactory Character has been given of him, and accepted by the Major part of the Society.

V. LET this Perſon be requir'd modeſtly by the Steward, to give an account of the Reaſons which induced him to enter into the Society.

VI. LET every new Member be oblig'd to ſubſcribe his Name, as a Teſtimony of his aſſent to the Articles and Orders of the Society, and as a promiſe of his due Obſervance of the ſame.

VII. LET no one be admitted who is not of the Church of *England*.

VIII. 'TIS required that ſome private Friend give an admonition to any one who walks diſorderly, or abſents often.

IX. THAT if private Admonition is diſregarded, the Steward, if it is conſented to, admoniſh him before the whole Society, after which if he doth not reform, let him be deſir'd to withdraw.

X. THAT no Persons for fear, or favour, shall forbear to check any vain discourse about News or Secular Affairs.

XI. THAT no Member shall be permitted to withdraw unless he gives his Reasons for the same.

XII. THAT every Member shall sit as much in sight as he can, and that what any one speaks may be in the Audience of the whole Society.

XIII. THAT if any remarkable difference happens in the Society, some Learned and Godly Minister shall be consulted in order to compose it.

SOME of these Civil Canons are establisht amongst the Religious Societies, and many others which we think it needless to mention; since these are enough to explain their Polity to the Reader. But because a great part of these Orders differ from the common Discipline, we are oblig'd in courtesie to the Members of Religious Societies, to give our Reasons for our Alterations.

HAVING

HAVING obſerv'd ſome private Emulations in theſe Societies, which took their birth from the Election of Stewards, we thought that it would be more convenient for every Member to be Prelector (or which is the ſame thing) to read the Prayers in his turn; which Prelector we would have during one meeting to diſcharge the Office of a Steward; becauſe by this means the convenience of having a Steward will be continued without oppreſſing one perſon with the trouble for a whole year together; and without the unhappy circumſtance of at leaſt ſeeming to preferr one before another; for whilſt one perſon bears an Office ſo long, the other Members are in danger of being byaſſed by his Vote, and not acting with that freedom, which they ought in any emergency; but when they all are equal ſharers both of the trouble and privilege of the Office, no one will reckon himſelf, whilſt they are met, another's ſuperior; but all will expreſs that love and modeſt liberty which ought to be

among Equals, and Chriſtians who are Brethren in the Lord of us all.

AND therefore we hope that we ſhall eſcape the imputation of an affected Singularity, for offering this method.

BUT we muſt not omit to ſatisfie them, why we have recommended a ſtricter method of Admiſſion and Expulſion; which in ſome Chriſtians judgment, may ſeem to derogate from the calm carriage which becomes the Diſciples of the meek Jeſus. Our reaſon was this, becauſe many of the Religious Societies have been throng'd with very bad Members, through their eagerneſs of obliging Perſons (whether they are rightly diſpoſed or not) into their Fellowſhip, forgetting that a few zealous and peaceable Chriſtians, will flouriſh longer in unity, and an Exemplary Edification of one another, than a vaſt Company of lukewarm, paſſionate, and invidious pretenders; and that the felicity of ſuch engagements doth not. So much conſiſt in the number, as in the diſpoſitions of the Members;

bers; for we appeal to many of them, whether one bad Member hath not prov'd the Bane of a whole Chriſtian Corporation; which they cannot prevent, unleſs by their ſoft and gentle Admonitions (which are ſo lamentably omitted amongſt them) they heal and recover ſuch an one; or if the cure cannot be wrought by ſuch favourable Plaſters, a deſperate Diſeaſe muſt be deſperately cur'd, and the gangren'd Limb be cut off for the ſake of the whole Body: For 'tis an unreaſonable Charity, which wheedles Chriſtians to endanger the Safety and Credit of a whole Society, by ſparing a ſcandalous Member. This, we preſume, will vindicate the ſtricteſt Terms of Admiſſion, ſuch as examining what account they can give of the Faith which is in them, and obliging them not to leave the Society with a bundle of cloſe and private Reaſons; which is the too common cuſtom of thoſe, who, if the truth were known, do but in reality revolt from their holy Purpoſes: But ſuppoſing the caſe to be otherwiſe,

why

why ſhould Men be aſham'd to own to good Chriſtians, who will not divulge their Calamity, if that may be the reaſon; or will correct any Offence, if any ſuch thing be the cauſe of their withdrawing. In ſhort, by revealing their Reaſon, they will act conſcientiouſly, and without hypocriſie, and ſatisfie their Brethren; whereas by concealing them, they diſcourage the reſt by their Apoſtacy, or at leaſt by leaving evil Jealouſies and Surmiſings behind them.

IN like manner, our diſcreet Reader cannot well be at a loſs to diſcern the uſefulneſs of Expulſion from what we juſt now hinted: For as the external Authority and Luſtre of our Church, hath been not a little weaken'd and impair'd, becauſe through the Compaſſion which has been ſhewn to tumultuous Separatiſts, ſpiritual Cenſures, and other parts of Eccleſiaſtical Diſcipline, have been laid aſide of late: So the neglect of forewarning, and turning out thoſe, who have contemned, and by their indecent Cuſtoms,

ſtoms, abrogated that Teſt of Obſervance, which they laid upon themſelves, at their Admiſſion into Religious Societies, hath cauſed the Torrent of their Zeal and generous Deſigns, to ſtagnate and contract very much mire and dirt.

WHEREFORE we exhort all Religious Societies (for we do not ſpeak this to diſparage, or diſcourage, but to admoniſh them) more careful to put in execution this ſort of Diſcipline, for this will manifeſt to the World, that they do not court the external Splendour of Phariſaical Hoſts, but of pure and uncorrupted Chriſtians. This ſort of Diſcipline is far better than to inflict pecuniary Mulcts upon enormous Members; becauſe they make the *Decorum* of the Regular be conſtrued Sordidneſs, and encourage the Irregular to purchaſe the outward Paint and Varniſh of Zeal, by expiating their Offences with a Price.

IN

IN short, there is an absolute necessity of a strict Observance of these, and all other prudent Canons, though in themselves they being but ceremonial, are not inherently and eternally of an obligative nature; yet, such Appendages are the Instruments of Peace, and good Order; and when they are subscrib'd to, do oblige the Conscience: And as Pegs, and the least Joints of a Building, if not firmly fastned, threaten the ruine and dissolution of it; so these civil Orders and Rules, being violated, will bring Ataxy, Confusion, and every evil Word and Work into Christian Societies.

BUT though these are so useful, yet there are far greater matters still remaining to be spoke of; namely, those religious Exercises which have a nearer relation to God, and Goodness, which must reverently be perform'd, when the Members are met together. Now the convenientest method will be this:

TILL a competent Company is come, let some practical Portion of Scripture be

be read, or ſome other good and pious Book, by the Prelector; and after the Preventive Collect, their applying to themſelves the good Inſtructions which they have heard on the Lord's, or any Holy Saint's Day, will be the moſt proper Diſcourſe for them to be employ'd in: For this will root the Word deeper in their Hearts; that neither *the Fowls of the Air, nor the Cares of the World*, may devour the good Seed ſoon: But of what a weighty Conſequence the improvement of that, and the other Ordinances is, that ſaying of our Saviour, *To him that hath, ſhall more be given*, will ſave us the trouble of a Demonſtration; and therefore *ſince Faith comes by hearing*, it behoves you vigorouſly to exhort *one another with all diligence and love, that ye may give the more earneſt heed to the things which ye have heard.*

BUT if you have a larger Fund of Time, than what can be drain'd by reflections upon the Word *Heard*; there are ſome peculiar Subjects fit to be diſcourſed of, both as you are conſtant Recei-

Receivers of the Lord's Sacrament (which is so wofully neglected in our Age, and which your laudable Orders oblige you to frequent) and as you are Members of Religious Societies. As to instance, first, The Mercies and Goodness of God's Providence, which will quicken you in the performance of Divine Gratitude: This St. *Paul* recommends to Christians, by his exhorting the *Ephesians*, Chap. 5. 19. *To speak to themselves in Psalms and Hymns, and spiritual Songs, singing, and making melody in your Heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* This is a Duty grosly trod under-foot, by the Professors of Christianity now; and yet, 'tis the pleasanteſt of all Duties. Glorifying God is the main End for which we were born; and will be our Heaven hereafter: For 'tis a pleasant and joyful thing to be thankful, and all the Saints like it very well. And hence St. *Paul* urgeth this Duty in another place: *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,*

richly, in all wiſdom, teaching and admoniſhing one another in Pſalms and Hymns, and ſpiritual Songs. Which Text very plainly envites us to recognize the Mercies of God, and to declare them to one another with joyful Lips. And we cannot want motives to this Exerciſe, if we would but conſider, that the hearing Heavens, and the liſtning Earth, Beaſts and all Cattel, creeping Things and feather'd Fowls, Dragons, and all Depths, Fire and Hail, and the whole Univerſe of Things, chaunt his Praiſes.

SURELY Men therefore, who ſtand indebted to God tranſcendently beyond ſenceleſs Rocks and Mountains, and meer animated Organs of Clay, ought to extol his Name, who is excellent; but eſpecially thoſe Men who ſit under the ſhadow of God and Chriſt's bleſſed Ordinances with delight; who are fed and refreſh'd *with the ſincere Milk, and ſtrengthening Meat of his Word*, by his diligent Paſtours, *in due ſeaſon*; and are vouchſafed to be made Partakers of the moſt deli-

delicious and ſumptuous Banquets at the Royal and Plentiful Table of the King of Heaven; *Thoſe who always fear his Name, and hope in his Mercy, which is ſo very comfortable*, they ought, with the flaming and glorious Inhabitants of the ſupreme Orb of Greatneſs and Plenitude, who caſt their Crowns before Him with the moſt amazing exultancy and ſatisfaction, to echo out his Praiſes, who ſhields his militant Servants with his Right-hand againſt the Devil; furniſhes them with a magazine of Courage and Faith, Love and Soundneſs of Judgment, Humility and Vigilance; to comprehend all in a word, with the Panoply of God; to ſee at a diſtance, and with readineſs, the Scouts batter down the Bulwarks, encounter and put to flight the Armies of Hell: Theſe cannot forbear ſpeaking of God's ſpiritual Kingdom, and to make known his mighty Acts to the Children of Men, and confeſs, that *an everlaſting Kingdom* ought to be aſcrib'd to him, and *a Dominion which endures throughout all Gene-*

Generations: What can more become ingenious Chriſtians in the Council of the Saints, *than magnifying the Lord together*, and freely *to tell one another what great things God hath done for their Souls*; that hath not only created them, but created in them new Hearts by his Fatherly Afflictions, and Temperaments of the moſt endearing Mercies, by the Voice of his Miniſters in the Temple, the ſoft and kind Whiſpers of his Spirit in the Cloſet, by the Aſſiſtance of his valiant Angels, and the Exhortations and Prayers of all good Chriſtians, by his own long-ſuffering, and thouſand ten thouſand ſtreams of Love, which run through ſecret and unknown Chanels.

AND as it is he that hath delivered you from the Snares of the ſpiritual Hunter, and the noiſome Peſtilence of wicked Men; ſo 'tis he only, who ſtill *upholds the feet of his Saints, whilſt the wicked are ſilent in darkneſs*; delivering them, and always is able and willing to deliver them to their Lives end; he ſtrengthens thoſe that

ſtand: *Is any weak? his ſtrength doth the more abundantly appear in their weakneſs.* The meer reflecting that the Snare is broken, and you are deliver'd, cannot certainly but extort from you, if there be any ſence of it, an Ocean of Joy and ecſtatick Praiſes: How ought then your Hearts and Mouths to overflow with Hallelujah's, when you conſider that he ſpreadeth ſuch a continual Canopy of Protection and Favour over your heads; *Leading you into his Banquetting-Houſe, and his Banner over you is love*; and if you pray to, and humbly praiſe him, he will pour down Love and Unity, and all other heavenly Graces upon you in innumerable Clouds: *Praiſe the Lord therefore with Sion: O praiſe the Lord with all Jeruſalem.*

DON'T marvel, Brethren, that we have ſhook of the Reins on this Head, ſince we have put this firſt; and 'tis a Subject ſo copious, and which, if Men's Minds are looking Heaven-wards, as they ought to be on the Lord's Day, will not ſuffer Chri-

Chriſtians to be ſilent when they meet together; for the Riches of God's Mercy, and the Myſtery of its unfathomable depth, unſoarable heighth, immenſurable breadth, and length, is a Riddle which the Ages of Eternity can never reſolve us.

2. NEXT to divine Gratitude, Charity is a Subject, which may take place before any other; for when we receive the Sacrament, we ought not only to be enflam'd with the wonderful Love of God, but alſo we are oblig'd by our Saviour the more affectionately to love one another: For, as St. *John* argues, *If we do not love our Brethren whom we have ſeen, how ſhall we love God whom we have not ſeen?* Charity therefore is a very fit Subject to be diſcours'd upon in Religious Societies; for if that Principle ſits at the Helm in the Hearts of Chriſtian Brethren, they will *dwell together in Unity*, the Bond of Peace, and univerſal Righteouſneſs of Life. For this Noble and Divine Principle, is a fragrant

Chaplet of all thoſe Graces which fit us for, or ſweeten Society. This Grace will baniſh all Pride and Malice, Rancour and Envy, Jealouſie, Impatience, and unruly Paſſions or Affections, all unkind Reſentments and offenſive Carriage, all ſullen Silence, bitter Words, and low Deſigns from among them. And thus St. *Paul* gives an account of it, 1 *Cor.* 13. 4, 5, 6, 7. which place, if you will take the pains to conſult, will open to you the wonderful Fruits of this Grace, you will learn from him, how it ſooths you to be kind to one another; how it obliges you to utter words which will miniſter Grace unto the Hearer's Soul: For that indeed is the trueſt and nobleſt Charity, which contributes to the perfection of immortal Souls; which provokes you to *give all diligence, to add to your Faith Vertue, and to Vertue Knowledge, and to Knowledge Temperance, and to Temperance Patience, and to Patience Godlineſs, and to Godlineſs Brotherly Kindneſs, and to Brotherly Kindneſs Charity.* Whence you ſee that

that that great and noble Apoſtle, who converted ſo many Countries to the Chriſtian Faith, judg'd Charity not only to be greater than Faith, or Hope, but than all theſe fore-mention'd Vertues: And juſtly too; for this Grace not only comprehends and advances all the other, but the more ſhe is exerciſed, the more ſhe is enlarg'd in us: Every ſtep we go forward in her extenſive Kingdom, diſcovers to us new Fields of Delight, Grace, and Joy. If ſhe abounds in us, we cannot be unfruitful in the Knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. A Mind enrich'd and fortified with Charity, is a Palace which God, who is all Light and Purity, has claim'd for his ſole Reſidence; and therefore 'tis ſo ſtrongly immur'd and fenc'd, that all the ſpiteful Fiends of Darkneſs can never break it open, and enter into it.

THIS uſhers us into the Society and Communion of the holy Myriads of Angels, *the General Aſſembly of the Church of the Firſt-born, and of the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect.* For how

ſhould it fail of procuring us the eſteem and love of glorious Beings, when it inſtructs us in all the ſweeteſt Arts of Endearment, and to dive ſafely into the Abyſs of heavenly Philoſophy; and is continually edifying the Church of Chriſt; for that is the Rule, *It edifies*; that's the Employment of Divine Charity, both ſtriving to enlarge the number and poliſh the goodly Stones of his Temple.

THIS rendreth all our other Gifts and Graces uſeful; for hereby not only our Judgments are improv'd, but our own Lives: For how can a wicked Life edifie? And the more we advance in the true Love of our ſelves, by improving our ſelves, the more we ſhall love our Neighbour; for we are to love our Neighbour as our ſelves. Now we ought to love our ſelves according to our degrees of being like to God, for that is the meaſure of Self-love: But ſince our being like to him, conſiſts in our progreſs in Holineſs; the more holy we are, the more we ſhall be capacitated to love our Neighbour,

bour, and to do good to others by our Admonitions, Exhortations, and other Exerciſes of Charity. And thus we ſhall be hoiſted up by Charity to love God for his own ſake, and our Neighbours and ſelves chiefly for God's ſake.

3. FURTHER, Chriſtians, when met in Religious Societies, may very uſefully diſcourſe of the ſhortneſs of Humane Life, and the exactneſs of the future Judgment: For by putting one another in mind, how *the Righteous are taken away from the evil to come*, and muſt be *hid as well as others in the ſilent Grave* till the Reſurrection, and conſidering that *after Death comes Judgment*, and that this *Judgment muſt firſt begin with the Houſe of God*, before *Go ye curſed* is pronounced upon the Wicked; they will thereby be incited to beſeech one another as Brethren, *by the coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and our gathering together unto him*, 2 Theſſ. 2.1. where ἐπισυναγωγὴ, if we have any reſpect for the Connexion, muſt ſignify the Congregation of the whole

World, when all Mankind ſhall be ſummon'd to appear before the Judgment-Seat of Chriſt, to give an account for their Works done in the Body, whether good or bad.

THIS Conſideration frequently entertain'd among Chriſtians, will oblige them to have *their Loins girt about, and their Lamps burning, to watch and pray continually, expecting the Lord's return from the Wedding*, to judge themſelves, that they may not be judg'd the Lord; to confeſs their Sins unto one another, taking ſhame to themſelves, and directing one another to avoid them for the future; that (though the Wicked may deride them for their Simplicity and Care) they may be reconciled to, and acquitted with Honour and Reſpect, by that God who is faithful and juſt to forgive us thoſe Sins, which we confeſs and forſake, when the Lord Himſelf ſhall deſcend from Heaven with the Trump of God, and we ſhall be ever with the Lord: Wherefore beloved Brethren (as occaſion requires it) comfort one another with theſe Words.

BUT

BUT though theſe are the moſt proper Subjects of Diſcourſe; yet, we would not have you confine your ſelves ſo much to them, as to omit to diſcourſe of many other uſeful Heads; only take care, that rather than run into idle Communications and vain Janglings, your Subject be practical, and that you may avoid a barren Silence, which is very improper in Society.

BUT ſince it is Chriſtians Buſineſs not only to ſpeak, but alſo to hear when they are met together, it will not be inconvenient to give ſome Directions for your fruitful hearing of good Diſcourſe, and by the way to forewarn you that you do not deſpiſe any good Counſel or Obſervation, becauſe it is not deliver'd with a Grace, and dreſs'd up in ſtudied Eloquence: Neither on the other hand ſhould you cenſure any one, becauſe he is endued with a more happy Faculty of Expreſſion than others; as if he ſpoke more for the ſake of erecting his natural Parts, than for inſtructing his Brethren in the way of Godli-

Godliness; for we ought not so much to scan upon the speaker as upon what is spoke. And besides, 'tis dangerous to judge the intentions of other men, for Christians are commanded *to judge nothing before the Lord come, who will make manifest the secrets of mens hearts.* Again, you should not judge what you hear to be unprofitable, because you have heard it often before; for the use of Religious Conferences in private, as well as of publick Preaching, doth not consist in amusing your fancies with new Notions, but in the working your affections to like and approve of wholesome Truths more and more, and in rouzing your attention to those Subjects which are despis'd as being trite, and well known by the meanest Christians, but which are of the most weighty nature, and which if they can be thought of often without operating more sensibly every time we hear them, to the improvement of our lives, will aggravate our guilt in the sight of God; how would the heart of some well dispos'd Heathen leap at the hearing

ing of a Saviour, and a Holy Ghoſt, and a Heaven offer'd to him? therefore 'tis a greater bleſſing becauſe all partake of it in our Kingdom.

WE all (praiſed be God) enjoy the light of the Sun, which all muſt acknowledge to be one of Nature's greateſt benefits, and if we deſpiſe it becauſe 'tis common, let the joy of a priſoner diſmiſs'd from a dark Dungeon ſhame our ingratitude, and convince us that 'tis a greater bleſſing, becauſe 'tis ſo common; the cauſe is juſt ſo in Spiritual matters. The wiſdom of the world is fooliſhneſs with God, and he that can countenance his vices when he hears the laſt Judgment ſounded often in his Ears, becauſe 'tis a common preſervative againſt ſin, detains his Soul in great danger.

TO finiſh our advice to both Speaker and Hearers, we thus briefly with the Apoſtle caution you, *to be ſwift to hear, but ſlow to ſpeak, for in the multitude of words there is ſin*; and withall *to be ſlow to wrath*, and cenſoriouſneſs, *for the wrath of men worketh not the righteouſneſs of God.*

SECT.

SECT. IV.

Giving ſome Directions to all Members of Religious Societies, how to behave themſelves when they are abſent from their Meetings, with the improvement of the whole Chapter.

WE have already ſurvey'd your Diſcipline, Religious Exerciſes, and the propereſt methods of uſing them in Religious Societies; now we proceed to conduct you out of your Meetings into the world, and to recommend ſome Duties which are more peculiarly incumbent upon you as Members of ſuch Religious Societies, for all your pious Diſcourſes and Religious Exerciſes, without a tenour of Chriſtian practiſe and uſefulneſs in the world, will appear but as empty formalities and pretences in the judgment of God: and therefore not to trouble you with a repetition of thoſe Duties, and requiſite practices which are imply'd in what has been laid down before,

fore, and ſuppoſing you not to be defective in them: We exhort you,

1. To labour after the Converſion of others. Religious Societies ſprung firſt from this practice, and Chriſtian charity obliges you ſtill to continue it; for ſince there are few Chriſtians who are not forc'd ſometimes by their Affairs to hold ſome correſpondence with the wicked, and ſince very oft a private Exhortation hath wrought more upon a wicked man than many excellent Diſcourſes deliver'd from the Pulpit in publick. And further ſince Members of Religious Societies are ſuppos'd, becauſe of their opportunities, ſufficiently arm'd to keep themſelves clean from the pollutions of the Age; and therefore their Exemplary Lives will give the greater authority to their Perſwaſions, they ſhould not be afraid or aſham'd to rebuke Vice in an humble and meek manner; ſince hereby perhaps they may convert many from the *errors of their ways, ſave* no ſmall number of *ſouls from death*, and ſo *hide the multitude of their own miſcarriages*: And

And we hope that the ſucceſs which many have found, will encourage them to do likewiſe. And therefore we entreat thoſe good Chriſtians who are of a competent Age and Prudence (which they may be without having any juſt temptation to be proud) not to ſtart back ſcornfully in an inſtant out of the company of the wicked, that they may try the experiment of their love on them; for they ought not to deſiſt, becauſe they find oppoſition, for ſuppoſing that with ten thouſand Exhortations, they reſcue but one precious ſoul from ſin and Satan; yet by how much the more they have ſtriv'd to ſave, ſo much the brighter and more weighty ſhall their Crowns of Glory be; ſince they can waſh their hands clean from the Blood of thoſe who will deſtroy their own ſouls, how kindly ſoever they are diſſwaded from their follies. And beſides, if their good endeavours are wholly fruſtrated, yet they will manifeſt their zeal, honour their Profeſſion, check the current of their vain Diſcourſe, and get rid of their offenſive com-

company; for bad men will fly the preſence of really good Chriſtians, as Bats and Owls do the light of the Sun, they will ſhew that they are not to be ſcar'd from exerciſing ſuch uſeful offices by being call'd Pragmatical, for why ſhould a good Chriſtian be counted a buſie body, for not ſuffering ſin upon his fellow Creature, rather than the wicked, who ſo commonly urge others to joyn with them in their hurtful practices?

2. IT behoves Members of Religious Societies to carry themſelves courteous towards all men. The wicked and diſſolute are naturally inclin'd to form monſtrous Ideas of Religion in their minds; hence it comes to paſs, that they are apt to ſuſpect that a Religious Life makes men moroſe in Converſation. Now the courteſie and affable carriage of good Chriſtians is the moſt effectual way, which can be us'd to rub the error out of their minds. But though 'tis expedient to do all kind Offices very readily to all men, yet, they ought in a more eſpecial manner to be ready

ready to miniſter to thoſe who are of the Family of Faith. Fellow Members of Religious Societies ought not between their times of meeting to look on one another at a diſtance, as foreigners, and ſtrangers; but they ſhould viſit one another frequently; their forwardneſs to aſſiſt one another in any turn of affairs, as far as they are able, will credit Religion; Chriſtans ſhould eſteem Chriſtians, becauſe they are the friends of God, friends to their Souls, Pilgrims, hated and deſpightfully us'd in the world; they ſhould for that reaſon obey the Prophet who crieth, *Comfort ye, comfort ye, my people, ſaith the Lord*; but what can be a greater comfort to a diſconſolate Chriſtian, than the frequent converſation of thoſe who can conſult together with him, to walk inoffenſively, to bear reproaches patiently, to avoid all occaſions of ſin, to withſtand thoſe temptations to which they are moſt obnoxious, and to cleave to God and goodneſs? They who inſtead of doing this, reveal the ſecrets of others ſouls, paſſionately ſpeaking againſt,

gainſt and ſtaining the reputation of their Brethren, by which practices they wound Religion, ought to be ſharply blam'd.

3. MEMBERS of Religious Societies ought to remember one another in their private Prayers. For ſince 'tis our duty to pray for the converſion of ſinners, much more ſurely for the perſeverance of Saints: Here by the way we may gather the uſefulneſs of communicating Doubts and Grievances to one another; for humble Chriſtians will judge others to be better than themſelves, and therefore that their Prayers are the more prevalent, but 'tis moſt uſeful to have thoſe things interceded for, which they want moſt, but how can that be done, unleſs they firſt impart their wants?

CHRISTIANS ought in like manner to give thanks for one another, for the mercies which they have receiv'd.

THIS practice will aſſure God that your love is unfeign'd, and conſequently he will incline the more propitious

ears to the Prayers which ye make together.

4. WE adviſe you to reflect upon your carriage and improvement in your meetings, that you may ſee whether ye receive the benefits, which as we have ſhewn may flow from frequenting Societies, and if you find your expectation anſwer'd, you may give the more hearty thanks to God; but if the caſe is otherwiſe, you may ſearch and find out the impediments, and accordingly endeavour to remove them by Repentance and Prayer.

5. WE adviſe you to examine not only what uſeful Diſcourſe you have heard there, but whether ye have ſpoke any thing ſeaſonable, and to edification. And that you may do your Brethren ſome good, you ſhould allow your ſelf ſome ſpare time to deliberate, and read ſome practical Leſſon of the New Teſtament privately, and pray to God that your heart may be enlarg'd, and the door of utterance may be open'd to you, and that what you ſpeak may be as weighty, brief and affecti-

affectionate as you can poſſibly contrive.

6. AND laſtly, with the Apoſtle St. *Paul*, we exhort you to ſee, that you *walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe, redeeming the time, becauſe the days are evil.* Thoſe that are without pry with Dragons eyes into your behaviour; they walk more by Example than by Rule, and will greedily ſnatch at any occaſion to ſully the reputation of thoſe who profeſs greater ſtrictneſs of life than themſelves. And therefore ye ſhould be very ſtrict obſervers of the Lord's-day, never reſorting to Houſes of publick Entertainment, unleſs urgent occaſions compell you, never ſitting up late at Gaming, eſpecially on thoſe Feſtival days which are ſeparated to the honour of our Saviour. In a word, you ſhould keep always on the hither ſide of your liberty, leaſt by tranſgreſſing the ſmall point which terminates it, the immoderate uſe therefore, *prove an occaſion to the fleſh; offend the weak Brethren*, and be a matter of joy to the profane, and thoſe

who live as it were *without God in the world*.

HAVING, as we hope, clearly enough repreſented the neceſſity and uſefulneſs, the tendency and Diſcipline of Religious Societies, as alſo the qualifications and proper deportment of the Members of them, both in their Meetings, and at other times, there can be nothing wanting but ſincerity, zeal and impartiality to induce all Chriſtians, who have been averſe to theſe undertakings, and ſtickled ſo hotly for a retir'd Vertue; to be perſwaded at laſt, ſince Nature and our Bleſſed Saviour, would have us be Sociable in Religious Exerciſes, to joyn together with them, or at leaſt not Unchriſtianly to rail againſt them.

AS alſo we hope, that thoſe Chriſtians who have already engag'd in them, if they are offended with any diſorders, will freely communicate it, before it gets too ſtrong a head to be remedied, that they may be regulated, or elſe they will never attain the great and proper ends of their meeting together.

THOSE

THOSE of them who are discreet and well experienc'd Christians may found and erect new Societies in their Neighbourhood: And when they attempt such a great and Godlike work, they should consult some Learn'd and Pious Minister of the Church of *England.*

THUS Pious and Prudent Gentlemen may find leisure frequently to meet together, as some already in *London* do, on purpose to animate one another to Charity and good works. Likewise Scholars and young Students who are big with the noble design of guiding Souls, should meet oft, and consult together; for certainly they stand in need of the greatest aids and supplies of Knowledge and Courage, Zeal and Piety, Grace and Heavenly Preparations.

ACCORDINGLY some young Members of one of our Universities meet together on the Lords-day, and other Festivals in two different Societies, to exhort one another to live very circumspectly, to improve and employ

their natural Gifts to the Glory of God the donor of them, by the ſtrictneſs of their manners, and their fitting themſelves, that they may zealouſly endeavour to reclaim the wicked, and eſtabliſh Men in the Ancient Faith and Chriſtian practice. This is a faithful relation, and which we can venture ſteadily to aſſert, for we receiv'd the Information from very creditable hands: Indeed 'twas very joyful News to us, and ought to be ſuch to all good Chriſtians, for it ſhews that there are ſome who will not ruſh headlong into the great office of the Miniſtry. And therefore thoſe who have Unchriſtianly contemn'd a Learn'd Clergy for the ſake of a few, that are otherwiſe, ſhould encourage thoſe by their Prayers, who will, we have great reaſon to hope, prove Ornaments to the Church of *England*, and blot out former Scandals; though indeed more have been taken to the detriment of Religion, than would have been, did our Laity conſider Caſes rightly.

MAY God grant that ſo ſelect a Progeny of the Univerſity may thrive, and proſper, may encreaſe in Divine Knowledge and Wiſdom, may be united together by Charity and Meekneſs, and propagated more and more to the honour and joy of our *Sion*.

The CONCLUSION.

Earneſtly exhorting all faithful Members of Religious Societies to Perſeverance.

GENTLEMEN,

THIS Treatiſe was chiefly written for your ſakes; and though our Counſel may be ſcorn'd and rejected by a wicked and cenſorious Age, yet we truſt that your Candor and Chriſtian Charity will prevail with you, not to fruſtrate the honeſt deſign of this ruſtick and plain Diſcourſe, for we freely acknowledge it to be ſuch; our ambition was to write to you as Chriſtians, not as Orators and Philoſophers. And therefore we pray you to *ſuffer a little the word of Exhortation, Let brotherly love continue:* They are St. *Paul*'s own words; without love and charity no deſign can flouriſh; if a Houſe or a Kingdom be divided againſt

againſt it ſelf, it cannot ſtand. So neither can Chriſtian Societies ſtand, if there be Diviſions amongſt them. *Wherefore, if there be any conſolation in Chriſt, if any comfort of love, if any fellowſhip of the ſpirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfill ye our joy, that ye be like minded, having the ſame love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through ſtrife, or vain glory, but in lowlineſs of mind, let each eſteem other better than themſelves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man alſo on the things of others.* Oh! *may Grace, Mercy and Peace be multiplied upon you from God our Father, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* And we earneſtly pray, *that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.* Oh! do but conſider with your ſelves what pains and ſtruglings you were forc'd to take before you could ſubdue your luſts, and reſiſt the temptations of the Devil, and a wicked world; will you now after all your ſweat and fatigue, flights of zeal, Faſts and long Devotions, after ſo many penitent

nitent tears, agonies and convulſions of ſpirit, when all theſe could ſcarcely bring you to a truly Chriſtian temper, will ye after ye have detected the dark intriegues and treachery of your private enemies, and diſhearten'd the aſſaults of your publick ones; will ye we ſay after ye by ſuch a ſlow and lingring pace have been convinc'd and enlightned, and at length have arriv'd to taſte and ſavour by experience the ſweetneſs of Heavenly gifts, deſiſt in the day of Battel? Did you find your holy purpoſes made more brisk and puiſſant, by numbring your ſelves among the Saints, and frequenting theſe Religious Societies? Take heed that you do not revolt from them. Shall all the members of thoſe Societies be ſaved? We do not ſay it; we know not: Shall all that deſiſt from them be damn'd? God forbid; we dare not ſay it: we judge not. This nevertheleſs we do ſay, That ſince the good work was begun in you, and ſet forward by your entrance into, and continuance in them, 'tis dangerous to let every

every ſlight motive cut you off from thoſe Societies, ſince God's Providence may have deſign'd you to wait for the accompliſhment of it in them; why ſhould you when you have put your hands to the Plough for the ſake of ſhame or earthly good pluck it back again? None but he that holds out to the end ſhall be ſav'd; God hath no pleaſure in any ſoul which draws back; no more than we have in ſalt which hath loſt its ſavour, and is good for nothing but to be caſt into the dunghill.

TAKE heed therefore, Brethren, that your Reaſons be ſound and lawful, but we are afraid that theirs are not who durſt not diſcloſe them. 'Tis acknowledg'd, that Parents and Maſters ought to be obey'd if they forbid you: But are all of you ſervants? are all under Parents, Tutors and Governors? No, but who hath ſet us over you? Surely God, and God only is the Righteous Judge of the World: Brethren be not offended: We are jealous over you with a Godly jealouſie: There are many Reaſons which will acquit you

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at the laſt; but there are far more, which though they may now cloak your Apoſtaſie, will be baffled then by God and your naked Conſciences.

BEWARE of the worſt, (*viz.*) a carnal heart, and weariſomeneſs in well-doing; for if it gets the maſtery over you, your eternal Salvation lies ſtake; for then 'tis too manifeſt that you leave the Religious Societies, becauſe you have ſhook hands with God and Goodneſs. But if it is ſo, what will your former Righteouſneſs ſignifie? hereby you do your ſelves more harm, and Religion more diſcredit, than thoſe who never were Religious at all: *Be not deceiv'd, God is not to be mocked, what a man ſows that ſhall he alſo reap.* A good God ſo highly provok'd will prove conſuming fire, a cruel and malicious Devil whom it coſt more trouble than ordinary to get you into his claws, will inſult over you more fiercely, his malignant train will mock you more deſpightfully, jeer and teaze you when they ſee you thrown at laſt into the darkeſt Gaol of Hell with them; Conſci-

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ence will do more than twinge, be in a paſſion, when the humour takes it, and make you bluſh as ſhe doth now; then ſhe will continually torture and domineer over you, her rage will, inſtead of commiſeration and pity, delay and forbearance, ſupply her with Whips and Scorpions; that ſhe may be aveng'd upon you with a witneſs, for betraying her out of the Regions of Tranquility, into a ſtate of eternal reſtleſneſs and miſery. *But though we thus ſpeak, we are perſwaded better things of you, and things that accompany Salvation.* We truſt that you, who like *Noah* and his Family have built for your ſelves Arks of Sanctity and Refuge, will keep your Dove within thoſe Walls; your innocence, we mean, till the flouds of iniquity are abated upon the face of the Earth; you who, by your examples illuſtrious in conjunction conſpire to reinſtate Vertue and Religion in her Throne on Earth amongſt us; and who like ſo many pleading *Abrahams*, by the Unity and intereſt of your Prayers, skreen our

Sodom

Sodom from the blaſts and heat of the Divine Vengeance. We already ſee with a Prophetick hope, ſuch a Divine flame kindled in your ſouls, that will ſuffer nothing to ſeparate you from the love of Chriſt, for we are verily perſwaded, that you will *by watching with all perſeverance in prayer and thankſgiving, and* inviolable *fellowſhip with the Saints, be ſo eſtabliſht, that neither death nor life, nor Angels, nor Principalities, nor Powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor the height of proſperity, nor the depth of adverſity, nor any other creature ſhall be able to ſeparate you from the love of God which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.* Which love if it doth ſo abound in you; the enlarged Kingdom of Chriſt, the immovable foundations of a tottering Church, the converſion of the wicked, the deſtruction of Hell's malice, the ſucceſsful arms of our Heroick Princes abroad, and the Dominion of Peace and Religion at home, will be eternal Panegyricks of your Praiſes, and the indelible Monuments of your Honour and Beneficence.

ficence. Oh! let ſuch ſubſtantial and Heavenly aims and proſpects, impregnate your breaſts with Heroick and Godly courage; that you *may not be ſoon ſhaken in mind, and your hearts may be eſtabliſht with grace*; till Grace is ſwallow'd up in Glory, when you ſhall take poſſeſſion of your inheritance, (*viz.*) a glorify'd God, who is all in all; his eternal reſt and joy; his Angels for your Convoys into Bliſs in the day of Judgment, who will take vengeance on thoſe who have derided you, and *ſeparate the Sheep from the Goats.* Your own Conſciences, which will continually warble forth notes of Joy and Thankfulneſs, Crowns and Scepters of Glory immarceſcible. In a word, an Eternity, in which the whole Man, Spirit, Soul and Body, will be perfectly happy.

THEREFORE, our beloved Brethren, be ye ſtedfaſt, immovable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, for as much as you know that your Labour is not in vain in the Lord. Now the God

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of Peace, and Father of Conſolation that brought again from the dead our Lord Jeſus, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Bloud of the everlaſting Covenant; 'ſtabliſh, ſtrengthen, and make you perfect in every good Work, working in you that which is well-pleaſing in his ſight, through Jeſus Chriſt, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt be glory for ever and ever, Amen; and let all the Saints ſay, Amen.

GO on, and the Lord proſper you: We wiſh you good luck in the Name of the Lord.

BE of good Courage, for the Lord is with you.

SINCE no good Work can thrive and proſper without God's Bleſſing, (for we may plant and water, but he muſt give the encreaſe, we thought it) requiſite to add a Form of Prayer, which was us'd in a Religious Society, and which we preferr'd before any other, becauſe it is the conciſeſt, and compiled for the moſt part out of the *Liturgy*.

BUT

BUT ſince ſome may complain, becauſe there is no Petition which ſeems particularly to relate to the Societies; we anſwer, That it is not ſo decent for them to uſe any particular or excluſive Prayers together. And further, to ſupply that defect, we have ſubjoin'd to this Form a Private Prayer, fit to be uſed by any one who deſigns to be admitted, and another to be uſed at every Member's leiſure, in his Cloſet, for the Religious Societies after Admiſſion.

A FORM OF PRAYER

Fit to be uſed in Religious SOCIETIES.

Before they begin, the Prelector (all ſtanding) ſhall devoutly ſay this Collect.

PREVENT us, O Lord, in all our Doings with thy moſt gracious Favour, and further us with thy continual Help, that in all our Works begun, continued, and ended in thee, we

we may glorifie thy holy Name, and finally by thy Mercy obtain everlaſting Life, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

Chorus. Amen.

When they have finiſhed their other Exerciſe, they may uſe this Form:

Prelect.] GOD is a righteous Judge, ſtrong and patient; and God is provoked every day. If we ſay that we have no ſin, we deceive our ſelves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confeſs our ſins, God is faithful and juſt to forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from all unrighteouſneſs.

Then ſhall they all devoutly ſay this Confeſſion after the Prelector.

ALMIGHTY and moſt merciful Father, we acknowledge and bewail our manifold Sins and Wickedneſs, which we from time to time moſt grievouſly have committed, by thought, word, and deed againſt thy Divine Majeſty; provoking moſt juſt-

ly thy Wrath and Indignation againſt us: We do earneſtly deſire to repent, and to be heartily ſorry for theſe our Miſdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous to us, the burthen of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us, moſt merciful Father; for thy Son, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt's ſake, forgive us all that is paſt, and grant that we may ever hereafter ſerve and pleaſe thee in newneſs of Life, to thy Honour and Glory, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

Then ſhall the Prelector alone ſay this Prayer following.

ALMIGHTY God, who hateſt nothing that thou haſt made, and doſt forgive the Sins of all them that are penitent, create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we worthily lamenting our Sins, and acknowledging our Wretchedneſs, may obtain of thee, the God of all Mercy, perfect remiſſion and forgiveneſs, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

Then

Then ſhall they all riſe, and repeat the Apoſtles Creed.

Prelect.] I Believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth. And in Jeſus Chriſt his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghoſt, born of the Virgin *Mary*, ſuffered under *Pontius Pilate*; was crucified, dead, and buried. He deſcended into Hell; the third day he roſe again from the dead: He aſcended into Heaven, and ſitteth on the Right-hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he ſhall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghoſt, the Holy Catholick Church, the Communion of Saints, the Forgiveneſs of Sins, the Reſurrection of the Body, and the Life everlaſting. *Amen.*

Chorus. We believe.
Lord, help our Unbelief.

All kneeling, the Prelector ſhall ſay,

O LORD our God, who haſt given us Grace by the Confeſſion of a true Faith to acknowledge the Glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the Power of the Divine Majeſty to worſhip the Unity, we beſeech thee keep us ſtedfaſt in this Faith, and evermore defend us from all Adverſities, who liveſt and reigneſt one God World without end. *Amen.*

Then ſhall they all ſay the Lord's Prayer after the Prelector.

OUR Father, which art in Heaven; hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily Bread. And forgive us our treſpaſſes, as we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the Kingdom, and

and the Power, and the Glory, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Then ſhall the Prelector ſay this Prayer.

ALMIGHTY God, who haſt promiſed that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name, thou wilt be in the midſt of them; we humbly beſeech thee, that the glorious Majeſty of thee the Lord our God may ſhine upon us, to the proſpering of the weak but ſincere Endeavours of us thy unworthy Servants, and of all others in whoſe Hearts thou haſt put good Deſires; that the ſame may be brought to good effect. There be many that ſay unto us, Who will ſhew us any good? O Lord, lift thou up the light of thy Countenance upon us, and add unto thy Church daily ſuch as ſhall be ſaved; let there never be wanting ſuch, as ſhall neither be afraid or aſhamed to own and confeſs Chriſt crucified in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe Generation, enable us (we beſeech thee) that are

here before thee, by thy Grace, to withſtand the Temptations of the World, the Fleſh, and the Devil. O direct our ſteps, by the comfortable aſſiſtance of thy Holy Spirit, that we may walk harmleſs and unblamable in the ways of thy Commandments. Strengthen us that are prone to relapſe, and ſurrounded with ſo many Snares: Uphold the weak; raiſe up them that fall, and finally beat down Satan under our feet. O Lord, give us the encreaſe of Faith, Hope, and Charity; that we may with pure Hearts and Minds follow thee, the only True GOD, chearfully and conſtantly during our Pilgrimage here, and eternally ſee thee hereafter, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

Then ſhall follow this General Interceſſion.

ALMIGHTY God, whoſe Kingdom is everlaſting, have mercy on the whole Church, and ſo diſpoſe the Hearts of thy Servants King *William*

liam and Queen *Mary*, that they may ever ſeek thy Honour and Glory; and grant to their whole Council, and to all in Authority under them, that they may truly and indifferently miniſter Juſtice to the ſuppreſſing of thoſe Vices which reign among us, and to the reviving of true Religion and Concord; and grant that all the Biſhops and Curates may be illuminated with the true Knowledge of thy Word, that by their holy Lives and ſound Doctrine, they may convert many to Righteouſneſs. And to all this People, grant thy heavenly Grace, that they may live in thy Faith and Fear, in Obedience to Authority, and in godly Love towards each other. Finally, we commend to thy Fatherly Goodneſs all that are afflicted or diſtreſſed in Mind, Body, or Eſtate: O Lord, relieve them according to their ſeveral Neceſſities; give them patience under their ſufferings, and a happy iſſue out of all their Afflictions; all which we beg in the Name and Mediation of Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour. *Amen.*

Here

Here all ſtanding up, the Prelector ſhall ſay,

Prelect.] O Praiſe the Lord with me.

Chorus.] LET us magnifie his Name together.

Prelect.] GLORY be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghoſt:

Chorus.] AS it was in the beginning, is now, and ever ſhall be, World without end. *Amen.*

Then ſhall they all ſay this Hymn that followeth, with a devout Voice, after the Prelector.

IT is very meet, right, and our bounden Duty, that we ſhould at all times, and in all places, give thanks unto thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlaſting God. Therefore with Angels and Archangels, and with all the Company of Heaven, we laud and magnifie thy glorious Name, evermore praiſing thee, and

and ſaying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hoſts, Heaven and Earth are full of thy Glory. Glory be to thee, O Lord moſt High. *Amen.*

Then all kneeling, the Prelector ſhall ſay this Collect.

O Everlaſting God, who haſt ordained and conſtituted the Services of Angels and Men in a wonderful Order; mercifully grant, that as thy holy Angels alway do thee Service in Heaven; ſo by thy appointment they may ſuccour and defend us on Earth, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. *Amen.*

And this:

GRANT, we beſeech thee, Almighty God, that the Words which we have heard this day with our outward Ears, may through thy Grace be ſo grafted inwardly in our Hearts, that they may bring forth in us the Fruit of good Living, to the Honour and

and Praiſe of thy Name, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

Then,

Prelect.] THE Grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the Love of God, and the Fellowſhip of the Holy Ghoſt, be with us all evermore. *Amen.*

A PRAYER *compoſed for the Uſe of any Chriſtian, who deſigns to be admitted into a* Religious Society.

MOST gracious God, I laud and magnifie thy Goodneſs, who alone workeſt in Man both to will and to do of thy good Pleaſure, and haſt at this time given me a ſenſe of my own Vileneſs, and that Duty which I owe to thee: Go on ſtill, I beſeech thee, to direct my weak and unſtable Judgment, that I may from my Heart approve of thoſe *Religious Societies*, which, by thy good Providence, are ere-

erected in our Kingdom, and all other things that are excellent.

AND, oh! do thou enable me to ſet my Heart at liberty from all worldly Vanities, that I may run in the ways of thy Commandments, and boldly reſort into the Company of the Righteous, without fear or ſhame, entering into the Council of thy Saints with ſuch a reverend Preparation of Mind and Life, as neither to prove treacherous to my own good Reſolutions, nor a ſcandal to them, amongſt whom I now purpoſe to be numbred. To which end, I humbly implore the free pardon and remiſſion of all my Sins paſt, thy Grace to deliver me from the power of them for the time to come, and the comfortable Aſſiſtance of thy Holy Spirit, that I and all the Members of thoſe holy Societies, may, by our wholſome Labours of Love, perſevere in the ways of Truth and Godlineſs: And this I beg for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, in whoſe Name and Words I further call upon thee: *Our Father*, &c.

A Prayer fit to be uſed by any Member of a Religious Society privately.

PRAISED and ever-celebrated be thy Goodneſs, O God, who doſt put good Deſires into the Minds of us thy humble Servants, and condeſcendeſt to take delight in all thoſe who call upon thee in ſincerity and truth.

HEAR me, I beſeech thee, thy humble and unworthy Servant, who now deſire thee to look down in mercy upon Chriſt's Holy Catholick Church, and eſpecially on thoſe of our Kingdom who have admitted themſelves into the Fellowſhip of Chriſtian *Societies*.

O do thou, who haſt begun a good Work in us, ſhower down upon us the abundance of thy Grace and Holy Spirit; that we may walk worthy of that holy Name whereby we are called; and may manifeſt, that we are part of thy peculiar People, by our being zealous of Good works.

PITY, O Lord, the many Defects and Frailties we labour under, in the per-

performance of ſacred Duties; pity, O Lord, and pardon them. Pity and help us at thoſe times wherein we are ready to ſink under the weight of our inward Corruptions, the Buffetings of Satan, or the Reproaches and Contagion of the wicked Multitude.

O LORD, of our ſelves we are blind and changeable, and ſubject to thy wrath; ſave, Lord, for Jeſus Chriſt's ſake, or elſe we periſh: Never leave us, nor forſake us.

PLENTIFULLY impart to us of thy Holy Spirit, that thro' a religious Dread of his glorious Preſence, our Underſtandings may be enlightned, and our good Reſolutions well balanced, that all Errour, Prejudice, needleſs Jealouſies, and Scrupuloſity, carnal Prudence, unwarrantable Zeal, and Thoughts of revolting may be baniſh'd far from us.

ENLARGE our Spirits with edifying Charity, that we may exerciſe brotherly Love without partiality or diſſimulation; and not being puffed up with vain Knowledge and Janglings,

lings, may communicate heavenly Wisdom, and thereby minister Grace to one another, till after we have abounded and stedfastly abided in all Grace and Goodness, we may be fitted for, and instated in a share of an Inheritance, with the happy Society of the Saints in Light: All which I beg for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Author and Finisher of our Faith, and Captain of our Salvation; in whose Name and Words I further call upon thee:

Our Father, &c.

FINIS.